

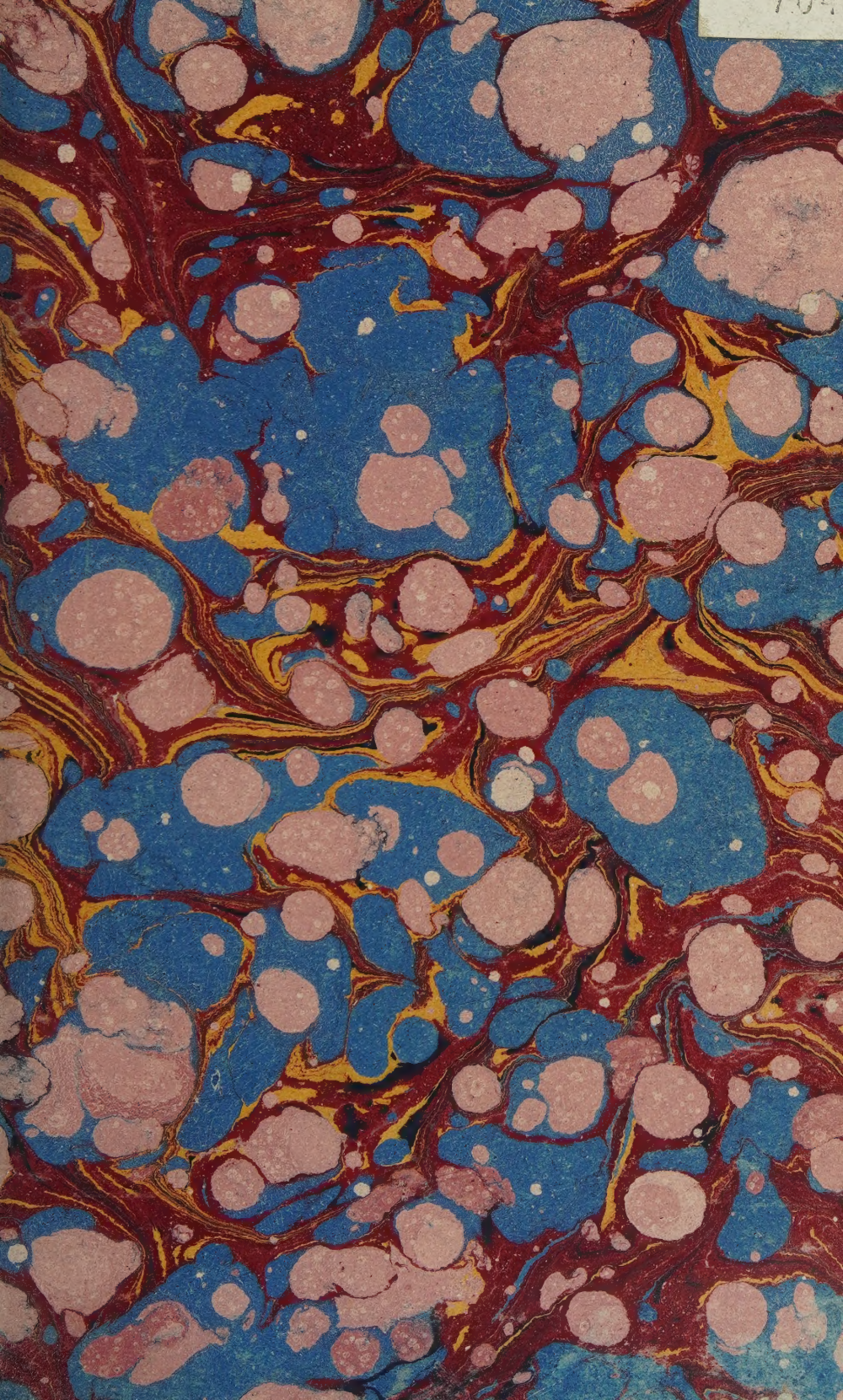
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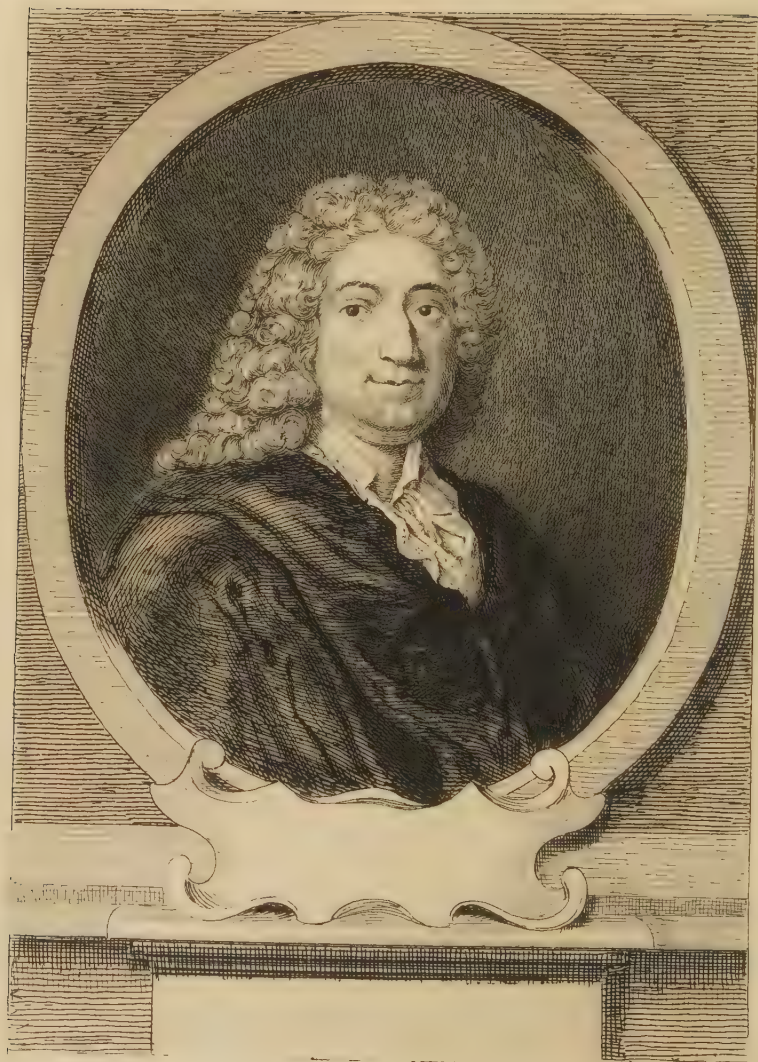
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THE ADVENTURES OF GIL BLAS
OF SANTILLANA.



THE ADVENTURES
OF
GIL BLAS
OF SANTILLANA

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
BY HENRI VAN LAUN

WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY NOTICE, LIFE OF LESAGE, AND NOTES



VOLUME FIRST

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM PATERSON

MDCCCLXXXVI

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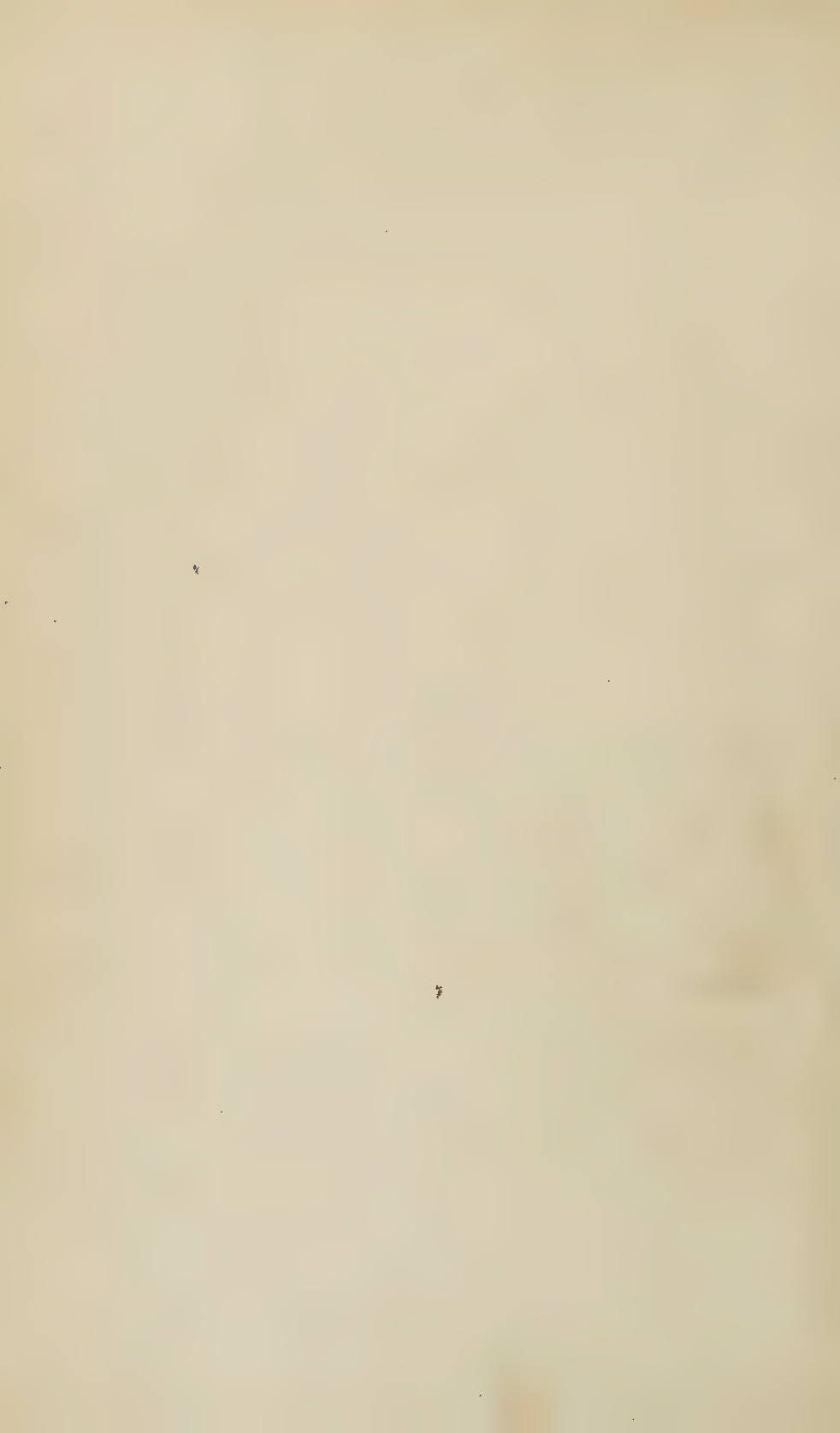
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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

LESAGE'S masterpiece, *Gil Blas of Santillana*, is the most widely known of all European works of fiction with the single exception of *Don Quixote*. It is a book to be studied as well as enjoyed. Though the world through which we follow Gil Blas may often remind us of the old comedy-world of intrigue and moral topsy-turviness—the world of flippant valets and roguish ladies-maids, of pliant duennas and arch lovers—none can read the story without finding in it one of the deepest criticisms of life ever penned. Of the vivid character painting, the penetrating observation, the lavish inventiveness, the vivacity of the narrative, no word need here be said. One remark, however, may perhaps be made in regard to the book's popularity in this country. A living poet and critic has observed that no third French author has ever found such acceptance and sympathy among Englishmen as Rabelais and Molière, in the writings of both of whom an "English note," a "northern flavour," is, he points out, plainly recognisable. Surely this "northern flavour" is equally perceptible in Lesage's work. French humour seems in general to tend either to harden into the grim and sardonic, or to effervesce in sparkling levity. But Lesage's humour has body as well as brightness, breadth and geniality, as well as shrewdness and point. He thus displays qualities which we are inclined to think peculiarly characteristic of English humourists—a fact to which the popularity

of his work in this country may be in a measure attributed. His work has certainly found as wide an acceptance among us as either Molière's or Rabelais'; Gil Blas and Laura, Fabricio and Don Raphael are familiar to many who have only heard vaguely of Panurge or Alceste, of Friar John or Monsieur Jourdain.

Lesage possesses the art of describing, in a fresh, pure, and simple style, that which is not pure, and of touching the evils of his time lightly, but always on the weak spot. Gil Blas tells his own adventures, and relates his illusions, his struggles, his failures and successes, with unimpaired cheerfulness and good-humoured philosophy. He dilates and reflects on all he sees, and exercises his wit as well on his own history as on the actions of the persons amongst whom he lives. His narrative is simple and drawn from the life; and yet there is hardly a feature of the picture which does not aim at satirising the foibles of mankind. Gil Blas spares nothing and nobody, and even his own shortcomings are exposed with sparkling drollery and vengeful frankness, though he gives himself credit—and to others as well—for the upwellings of a better nature. He is a true type of men kindly disposed and not evil-intentioned, but withal weak in the flesh and unable always to resist temptation, even whilst he knows that he will repent of it afterwards. *

Lesage, in his one-act farce, *Le Temple de Mémoire*, represented at the Fair St Laurent in 1725, and afterwards at the theatre of the Palais Royal, ridiculed the exaggerated admiration for Voltaire—then only known by the tragedies of *Œdipe*, *Artémire*, and *Mariamne*, and through his poem of *La Ligue*, a feeble and first sketch of the *Henriade*. A short delineation of this farce, which is now but seldom read, will show in what

way Voltaire was made fun of. Lesage's farce, interspersed with songs, opens with the appearance of Folly and Pierrot. The first bewails the misfortune that so many men are anxious to flirt with her, but that none seems to wish to marry her; whereupon her confidant advises her to adopt the name of Glory, and to promise a perennial name in history to him who will make her his wife, for "poets are not the only persons who love to be *mâche-lauriers* and *amateurs de fumée*." Fame approves of this advice; Folly thereupon shakes her bauble, and, as if by magic, the Temple of Memory arises on the top of a steep hill. Various suitors for her hand now come upon the stage. First, a conqueror, whose only delight is fighting, bullets, pistols, and knives, and who declares it as his opinion that "any one at the head of a goodly number of cavalry, infantry, and artillery has a right to another man's property." Then a rich miller makes her a proposal. Next an artist asks for her hand, dressed as a Harlequin, who professes to be a good fellow, promises to be very uxorial, and shows Folly how to borrow different colours from his variegated coat. Folly, disguised as Glory, recommends him to marry a rich woman, and not herself, for then he will be sure to die on a dung-hill. But the artist replies that he will be happy to live in her company on such a malodorous spot, whereupon Folly, carried away by enthusiasm, exclaims, *Vivent les Gueux!* an exclamation which the great French song-writer, Béranger, utilised, about ninety years later, as the last line of the burden of his song, *Les Gueux*. The poet, M. Tout-Uni, or Mr Quite-Smooth, now appears, and is anxious to obtain the hand of Glory, but is rebuked for his presumption by M. Prône-Vers, Extoller of Verses—by whom it is said

Voltaire's friend Thiériot was meant—who sues her in the name of that “Phoenix of poets,” his *illustrissime* friend, the *célébrissime* author of an *élégantissime* poem, “far superior to all poems past, present, and future, and the praises of which he will never cease to sing.” Folly replies that she knows by these hyperbolic epithets what kind of Homer is meant. Meanwhile, three other poets arrive as fresh suitors; and whilst one of them picks up a book from the ground, puns on the name of Voltaire, and says, *Je prends mon vol terre à terre*, she appears under her own true colours, argues that no difference exists between herself and Glory, and expresses her willingness to marry them all. She had already said of Voltaire's poem, *La Ligue*—

Dans ce poème si vanté,
L'art se trouve un peu maltraité.
Vous arrangez votre matière
Sens dessus dessous,
Sens devant derrière ;
Et les bons morceaux y sont tous
Sens devant derrière,
Sens dessus dessous¹—

and now sang in the fifteenth and last scene of the *Temple de Mémoire*—

Un sujet traité par Corneille
N'avait qu'un prix très-incertain ;
Mais il devient une merveille,
En nous passant de main en main !
Ha ! vraiment voire !
Ziste, zeste et lonla,
En grand trio te voilà,
Dans le Temple de Mémoire.

This couplet refers to Voltaire's tragedy, *Œdipes*, written when he was only eighteen years old, performed in 1718 forty-five times in succession, and

¹ These words are not to be found in the sixth volume of the *Théâtre de la Foire*, Amsterdam, Zacharie Chatelain, 1731, in which *Le Temple de Mémoire* is published.

published the following year with some letters to a friend, in which the *Ædipus* of Sophocles, a tragedy of the same name by Corneille, and his own, are analysed. Lesage renewed his attack on the poet ten years later. In the last volume of *Gil Blas*, which appeared in 1735, there is a portrait of Don Gabriel Triaquero, a fashionable playwright (bk. x. ch. 5), whom everybody runs to see, for no better reason than that he is fashionable, and which, it was generally believed, was intended for Voltaire. When, in 1752, five years after Lesage's death, the *Age of Louis XIV.* was published, the then celebrated Voltaire saw his way to pay off a literary grudge, and could not resist the temptation. He says in this work: "*Gil Blas* is still read because it is true to nature; but it is entirely taken from the Spanish romance called *La Vidad de lo Escudiero Dom Marcos d'Obrego*."¹ This criticism was soon followed by others.

¹ Ticknor, in his *History of Spanish Literature*, vol. iii., per. 2, ch. 34, observes: "*Marcos de Obregon* has been occasionally a good deal discussed, both by those who have read it and those who have not, from the use Lesage has been supposed to have made of it in the composition of *Gil Blas*. . . . That Lesage had seen the *Marcos de Obregon* there can be no doubt, and more that he made some use of it in the composition of *Gil Blas*. This is apparent at once by the story which constitutes its preface, and which is taken from a similar story in the *Prólogo* to the same Spanish romance; and it is no less plain frequently afterwards, in the body of the work, where the trick played on the vanity of *Gil Blas*, as he is going to Salamanca (Liv. i. c. 2), is substantially the same with that played on Marcos (Relacion i. Desc. 9), where the stories of Camilla (*Gil Blas*, Liv. i. c. 16; *Marcos*, Rel. iii. Desc. 8) and of Mergellina (*Gil Blas*, Liv. ii. c. 7; *Marcos*, Rel. i. Desc. 3), with many other matters of less consequence, correspond in a manner not to be mistaken. But this was the way with Lesage, who has used Estevanillo Gonsalez, Guevara, Roxas, Antonio de Mendoza, and others, with no more ceremony. He seemed, too, to care very little about concealment, for one of the personages in his *Gil Blas* is called Marcos de Obregon. But the idea that the *Gil Blas* was taken entirely from the *Marcos de Obregon* of Espinel, or was very seriously indebted to that work, is . . . absurd."

Marmontel, a great friend of Voltaire, is only half-hearted in his notice of *Gil Blas*, and writes of it as follows :

“Satirical romance, such as I conceive it, would demand at one time the pen of Lucian, of La Bruyère, or of Hamilton, at another time the pen of Juvenal, not to say the brush of Molière. Lesage’s pen would suffice, with a deeper study of manners, and with a more familiar and intimate knowledge of a certain rank of society, which the author of *Gil Blas* had not sufficiently observed, or which he only saw from a distance.”

It was not until the commencement of the present century that *Gil Blas* began to secure that high reputation as a work of art which is now generally accorded to it. One of the first literary critics who ranked it amongst the best specimens of French romance was La Harpe. He says :

“*Gil Blas* is a masterpiece ; it is one of the few novels which are always read again with pleasure ; it is a moral and lively picture of human life ; every rank appears in it, to receive or to give a lesson. Here instruction is never without charms. The *utile dulci* should be the motto of this excellent book, which is flavoured throughout with pleasantry of the right sort. Many passages have become proverbial, as for instance the sermons of the Archbishop of Granada. The interrogatory of the servants of Samuel Simon is worthy of Molière and is a cutting satire of the Inquisition ! In other parts of the book we find pictures of a reception of a first secretary, of the impertinence of actors, of the vanity of upstarts, of the folly of poets, of the luxurious living of canons, of the interior of noblemen’s houses, of the character of the great, of the manners of their servants ! *Gil Blas* is a school for the world. People say that the author scarcely depicts any other men but rogues. What does it matter if the pictures can be recognised ? Besides the author exercises his profession, for novels and comedy are a kind of satire. The excess of subordinate details is also cast in his teeth ; but these details are all real, and none of them is unimportant. He did not fall into that gratuitous profusion of minute circumstances which is nowadays put for the truth and which is of no significance. We know the characters of *Gil Blas* ; we have lived with them ; we continually meet them. Why ? Because in his portraiture of them there is not a single stroke without its design and its effect. Lesage had much wit, but he uses such skill in concealing it, he is so fond of hiding himself behind

his characters, he is so little concerned about himself, that one must have good eyes to perceive the author in the work, and to appreciate both at the same time."

In 1822 the French Academy offered a prize for the best essay on the merits of Lesage, and three of these written for this competition—those of M. Patin, M. Malitourne, and M. Saint-Marc Girardin—have been printed. From the first of these essays I quote another able criticism on *Gil Blas*. M. Patin writes :

"I cannot say whether Lesage himself was deceived by his art ; but is there one of his readers who has not at some time or other believed real the life-like pictures he draws in *Gil Blas*? His characters were known to us before he showed them to us, and since then we have often met them in the world. We might be tempted to say to him what a comic poet said to an ancient critic : 'O life, and O Menander, which of you imitated the other?' Each of the actors who play a part in this vast comedy has to represent to us a particular social class, but the hero of the piece may be regarded as the representative of all humanity. He is not much like the heroes of romance, who are for the most part chosen from outside the common herd, and who are distinguished from it by their feelings and their adventures. It is from the crowd, and as it were at random, that Lesage has taken his *Gil Blas*. He is ever attempting to confound him with the crowd ; he gathers together in this one person the most general characteristics,—I was going to say almost the most vulgar characteristics, of humanity—out of which he composes an ideal of weakness, inconsistency, and selfishness, to which everyone might conceive that he has contributed some feature. Born to be good, but easily drawn to be bad, whether *Gil Blas* gives way in spite of himself to the vicious tendencies of nature, or because he imitates the shortcomings which he is the first to condemn in others ; aiming in his actions only at his own advantage, and thus mixing up his interested calculations with the best emotions ; profiting by experience acquired at his own cost, in order to deceive in his turn those who have deceived him ; abandoning himself without too much scruple to retaliations of this description, and readily quitting the ranks of the dupes for those of the rogues ; yet capable of repentance and self-examination ; preserving to the last his inclination for uprightness, being firmly resolved to become again an honest man on the first favourable opportunity ; such, in brief, are the feelings displayed by *Gil Blas* in the various situations wherein he finds himself, and which are no more romantic than is his character."

A modern French *littérateur*¹ has well remarked :

"*Gil Blas* . . . reveals the aptitude of the French mind for psychological analysis; that impatience which renders it unfit for slow and multiplied observations, the ardour to hasten to the goal without devoting any time to linger on the way. *Gil Blas* is a true novel of morals and manners; moral observation there takes a form which English analysis has never known. The different chapters of *Gil Blas* are, so to speak, not different parts of the same work; each of these chapters is complete in itself and forms a distinct whole. They are, as it were, the dramatised paragraphs of a popular La Bruyère. Lesage takes an isolated observation, gives it a suitable name, expresses it quickly by a characteristic word, and continues his tale."

The great English romance writer, Sir Walter Scott, says of *Gil Blas*,² —

"Few have ever read this charming book without remembering, as one of the most delightful occupations of their life, the time which they first employed in the perusal; and there are few who do not occasionally turn back to its pages with all the vivacity which attends the recollection of early love. If there is anything like truth in Gray's opinion, that to lie upon a couch and read new novels was no bad idea of Paradise, how would that beatitude be enhanced could human genius afford us another *Gil Blas*. . . . The principal character in whose name and with whose commentaries the story is told, is a conception which has never yet been equalled in fictitious composition, yet which seems so very real that we cannot divest ourselves of the opinion that we listen to the narrative of one who has really gone through the scenes of which he speaks to us. . . . Lesage, though, like Cervantes, he considers the human figures which he paints as his principal object, fails not to relieve them by exquisite morsels of landscape, slightly touched, indeed, but with the highest keeping and the most marked effect. In the *History of Gil Blas* is also exhibited that art of fixing the attention of the reader and creating, as it were, a reality even in fiction itself, not only by a strict attention to costume and locality, but by a minuteness, and at the same time a vivacity of narrative, comprehending many trifling circumstances which might be thought to have escaped every one's memory, excepting that of an actual eye-witness."

¹ Emile Montégut, *La Nouvelle Littérature française, Revue des deux Mondes*, August 15, 1859.

² Walter Scott's *Prose Works. Biographical Notice of Alain Rene le Sage*, vol. iii., 1834.

One of the latest and ablest of modern critics, Mr George Saintsbury, in speaking of Lesage's masterpiece, says also :

"Now-a-days, perhaps, when the naturalist school, in its scorn of the namby-pamby, rushes into the opposite extreme and will have nothing but vice and ugliness, such a book as *Gil Blas* is infinitely more instructive, as well as more refreshing to read, than all the rose-pink pictures of impossible virtues and all the half-told tales of life with the dark side of it kept out of sight that literature can muster. . . . Here is a book as free from cant or from taint of the *hérésie de l'enseignement* as any one can desire, and which yet leaves no bad taste in the mouth, meddles with no abnormal crimes, and suggests as a total reflexion not merely that all's well that ends well, but that in most cases with fair luck all does end fairly well. . . . Within his circle he (Lesage) hardly yields to the master himself. Indeed, *Gil Blas* may hold his head in any company, even in the company of Shakspeare's children. . . . There is another point of importance in which Lesage has a resemblance to Shakspeare. He has not merely in some not small measure the quality of universality, but he has, and this in very great measure, the quality of detachment. He seems to look at his characters with the same inscrutable impartiality as that with which their creator contemplates Iago and Goneril, Macbeth and Claudius. . . . With those who have considered novel-writing seriously, he (Lesage) will always rank as one of the princes of character-drawing in its largest and most human sense, while with those who busy themselves with the history of French literature he will always hold the rank of the best writer of the first quarter of the eighteenth century."

The very trouble Lesage took to render his novel perfect, the pains he bestowed to become intimately acquainted with the habits and customs of the Spaniards of the times he describes, served as a reason for attacking him and his book, and for accusing him of impudent plagiarism. Father Juan d'Isla, a well-known Spanish author, stigmatised Lesage as having stolen *Gil Blas* from a manuscript which an unknown Andalusian advocate had given to the French *littérateur* whilst in Spain. The *padre* had his own Spanish translation of the French novel printed and published in Madrid in 1787, omitting some parts and altering

others, adding to it a long and not successful continuation, and stating on the title page that Gil Blas was "now restored to its country and native language by a Spaniard who does not choose to have his nation trifled with." But nobody believed in the Spanish advocate and in the manuscript given to Lesage in Spain, for he had never been there. In 1818 Count François de Neufchâteau read a dissertation before the French Academy, in which he tried to show that Lesage was the author of *Gil Blas*, and this dissertation he enlarged, improved, and published in 1820, as a preface to an edition of this novel.¹ The same year, a learned Spanish exile, Don Juan Antonio Llorente, who was then living in Paris, and who had just published a *History of the Inquisition in Spain*, presented to the French Academy a Memoir of Critical Observations, in which he attempted to establish that *Gil Blas* had not been written by Lesage, but by a Spaniard. This Memoir was forwarded to a committee, composed of MM. de Neufchâteau, Raynouard, and Lemontey; but no report seems ever to have been made. Eighteen months after the presentation of Llorente's Memoir, the first of these gentlemen read to the Academy an *Examen du nouveau système sur l'auteur de Gil Blas, ou réponse aux Observations critiques de M. Llorente*, which was published the same year. This was shortly afterwards replied to by

¹ This dissertation was really written by Victor Hugo, then a very young man. This is partly hinted at by the words Marius uses in the *Misérables*: "She (Cosette) would not fail to esteem and value me if she knew that I am the real author of the dissertation on Marcos Obregon de la Ronda, which M. François de Neufchateau appropriated, and used as a preface to his edition of *Gil Blas*;" and is absolutely confirmed in a chapter of *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie*, a work said to be written by Madame Hugo.

M. Llorente, who amplified and sent forth, in the form of a book, his *Observations critiques sur le Roman de Gil Blas de Santillane*, in which he maintains that this novel was the work of the Spanish historian de Solis, chiefly because no one but this gentleman could have planned a similar fiction at the time *Gil Blas* is supposed to have been written. Llorente's book is divided into fourteen chapters, of which the first and twelfth contain the pretended history of the manuscript, whilst the other ten attempt to prove its existence. The second chapter is called *A Chronology of the Life of Gil Blas*, and gives the days and the months when certain events of the novel are supposed to have happened. According to this chapter, Gil Blas, born in 1588, was about thirty-two or thirty-three years old when Philip III. died, and was fifty-eight or fifty-nine when he married for the second time in 1646.

In the *North American Review* for October 1827 appeared an article *Who wrote Gil Blas?* of which the author, the late Mr A. H. Everett, inclines to the belief that de Solis, and not Lesage, was the author of *Gil Blas*. He bases his opinion chiefly on Llorente's *Observations*, and states frankly that he had not seen the *Examen* of the Count de Neufchâteau, in defence of that novel, but had derived the latter's reasons from the work of Llorente. Mr Everett's arguments in favour of a Spanish origin of *Gil Blas* are :—

1°. The minute acquaintance of the author with the political, geographical, and statistical situation of Spain, and with the manners of its inhabitants.

2°. The considerable number of errors, more or less obvious, principally in the manner of writing the names of places and persons, and most naturally

accounted for by considering them as the errors of a person transcribing names with which he was not perfectly familiar.

3°. The mixture of Spanish idioms, and even Spanish words and phrases, to be found in *Gil Blas*.

4°. The illustrating, by an example in French, *les intermèdes font beauté dans une comédie*, the verbal niceties of the style of the Spanish poet, Gongora.

5°. The probability of Lesage having taken *Gil Blas* from the same source as *The Bachelor of Salamanca*, which came out in 1738 as an avowed translation from an unpublished Spanish manuscript.

These same arguments, amplified and worked out, as well as many fresh ones, have been used in an article also called *Who wrote Gil Blas?* which appeared in the June number of *Blackwood's Magazine* for 1844, and in which are ably maintained the views of those who persist in believing that *Gil Blas* is of Spanish origin. Following chiefly Llorente, the author of this article contends that *Gil Blas* is translated from a manuscript written in Spanish by Don Antonio de Solis y Ribadeneira, author of *Historia de la Conquista de Mejico*. The reasons given for this assertion are: 1°, that this novel abounds in facts and allusions which none but a Spaniard could know; and, 2°, that it abounds in errors which no Spaniard could make.

It is further averred that Lesage obtained the manuscript from the library of his friend and patron, the Abbé de Lyonne, third son of Hugo, Marquis de Lyonne, a lover of Spanish literature, who was sent on a secret mission to Spain in 1656 (1658), and who, whilst there, lived in great intimacy with Louis de Haro, Duke of Montoro. As an additional argument, it

is mentioned that the *Bachelor of Salamanca*, published in 1738, which the author himself admitted to be a translation from a Spanish manuscript, and of which he never produced the original, bears a great similarity to *Gil Blas*, and contains part of that manuscript relating to America, and not found in the last mentioned work of Lesage. Nineteen points of resemblance are brought forward to prove this. It is also argued that the frequent allusions in *Gil Blas* to some of the most remarkable characters of the court of Louis XIV. only demonstrate "that the extremes of society are very uniform . . . and the abuses of government . . . the same, or nearly so, in every country."

The facts and allusions which none but a Spaniard could know are as follows:—

1. The custom of travelling on mules, the coin ducats, the begging with a rosary as well as the extorting money in the manner which *Gil Blas* delineates, and the subterranean caves described by Captain Rolando.

2. The words *dire son rosaire*, *rezar su rosario*, as foreign to the habits of a *vieux militaire*; travelling the whole day without meeting anyone; the escorting of a coach, and the drawing of that vehicle by mules.

3. The treatment of prisoners in Spain.

4. The exact description of the class of women known in Spain by the name *Beata*.

5. The dinner hour at twelve during the reigns of Philip III. and Philip IV.

6. The description of the Spanish innkeepers, so different from the French, as well as the intimate knowledge displayed by *Gil Blas* of the houses of noblemen at Madrid (bk. ii. ch. 7, and bk. vii. ch. 13).

7. The acquaintance with Spanish habits and

customs, as Mergelina putting on her mantle to go to mass (bk. ii. ch. 7); Gil Blas joining the muleteer (bk. iii. ch. 1); Rolando informing Gil Blas that his comrades were three days in prison before being put to death (bk. iii. ch. 2); the allusion to the Andalusian way of managing a cloak (bk. iii. ch. 5); and to the *Caballeros en Plaza*, or amateur gentlemen bull-fighters (bk. iv. ch. 7); the dress of the inquisitor and his servants; the inkstand called *Tintero de Escribano*, which the Spanish scriveners always carry about with them, as well as the whole scene between Ambrosia de Lamela and Simon (bk. vi. ch. 1); the custom of carrying wine in leathern bags (bk. ii. ch. 6); the appointment of Ignatio to the archdeaconry of Granada, by virtue of a particular bull (bk. x. ch. 12); and the allusion which the Count Duke of Olivarez makes to Don Alphonso de Leyva about the objection of the Aragonese to be governed by any other but the king himself, or by a person of the royal blood (bk. xi. ch. 12).

8. The use in *Gil Blas* of “*Don*” prefixed in Spanish to the Christian and never to the surname, as Don Juan, whilst its synonym “*Dom*” is in France prefixed to the surname, as Dom Calmet; “*dame*” as a translation of *señora*, and the latter word itself; as well as the employment of many other Spanish expressions and idioms, such as *señor escudero*, *señor caballero*, *famosa comedia*, *hidalgo*, *contador mayor*, *oidor*, *escribano*, *hospital de niños*, *olla podrida*, *marmalada de berengaria*, *picaro*, &c.

9. The knowledge that during the reign of Philip IV. the actors lodged in the provinces in the buildings in which dramatic performances were represented.

10. The idiomatic Spanish verses which Don Gaston

de Cogollos sings in the Tower of Segovia (bk. ix. ch. 5).

11. The words which Lesage has evidently translated from the Spanish, such as *seigneur*, *dame*, *cavalier*, as well as many expressions of Spanish origin, such as *à Dieu ne plaise*, *ils sont tous plus durs que des Juifs*, *grâces au ciel*, *patriarche des Indes*, *garçon de famille*, *bénéfice simple*, *garçon de bien et d'honneur*, *fameux directeur*, *laboureur*, *disciple*, *viceroi*, *Juif comme Pilate*, *dormir la sieste*, *rendre de très-humbles grâces*, &c.

12. The local knowledge of Spanish towns, as shown by Gil Blas, such as the mentioning of a church at Toledo called *de los Reyes*, the speaking of the Prado of Madrid as the *pré de Saint-Jérôme*, the quoting the *Rue des Infantes* and the *Maison des Repenties* in the same town; and the statement that Lucretia, the repentant mistress of Philip IV., is going into the nunnery of *la Incarnation*, reserved expressly for nuns connected in some way with the royal family of Spain. To this should be added the alluding to no less than seventy provinces and large towns in Spain, and to one hundred and three Spanish villages and towns of inferior importance, many of them unknown out of that country.

13. The citing of the names of thirteen dukes and eight counts, of which four only are fictitious, whilst the title of *Admirante de Castilia*, also quoted, did not exist when *Gil Blas* was published; the naming of about sixty persons celebrated in their day among the inhabitants of the Peninsula, belonging to distinguished families, and the employment of twenty-nine names, really Spanish, but applied to imaginary characters, as well as forty-five names "intended to

explain the character of those to whom they are given, like Mrs Slipslop and Parson Trulliber in English, retained by Lesage, notwithstanding the loss of their original signification."

The errors which no Spaniard would make are :—

1. The orthographical mistakes which abound in *Gil Blas*, and which prove that Lesage transcribed his novel from a manuscript, such as *Corcuelo* instead of *Corzuelo*, *Manjuelo* for *Majuelo*, *Londona* for *Londono*, *carochas* for *corozas*, *cantador* for *contador*, *Segiar* for *Seguiar*, *Moyadas* for *Miajadas*, *Priego* for *Pliego*.

2. Lesage's ignorance of Spanish etiquette in supposing *Señor* and *Señoría* to be equivalent, the latter title being only given to people of high station and illustrious rank.

3. Lesage's interpolation of the anecdote about the rector of the University of Salamanca being found in the streets intoxicated; which does not tally with Spanish manners.

4. The many errors in the spelling of Spanish places, which go far to prove that Lesage did not copy these names from printed books.

5. The historical errors to be found in *Gil Blas*, and of which only one, which occurs in the story of Don Pompeyo de Castro (bk. iii. ch. 7), is confessed by Lesage, "though the original Spanish author may have fallen into some of them."

6. The errors of Lesage himself, such as Donna Mencia's first husband dying in the service of the King of Portugal, five or six years after the beginning of the seventeenth century; *Le Mariage de Vengeance* (bk. iv. ch. 4), which did not take place, as described, in the time of Philip II., but three hundred

years before, during the Sicilian Vespers, in 1283 ; Gil Blas, after his release from the Tower of Segovia, telling his patron, Alphonso de Leyva, that four months before he had held an important office under the Spanish crown (bk. ix. ch. 10), while he states to Philip IV. that he was six months in prison at Segovia (bk. xi. ch. 2) ; and, above all, the error of Scipio (bk. xi. ch. 1) returning to his master in 1621, and informing him that Philip III. had died, that the Cardinal Duke of Lerma had lost his office, and that the Count of Olivarez was appointed prime minister, whilst in reality the Duke of Lerma had been dismissed three years before the death of the King, and was succeeded by his son, the Duke of Uzeda. Hence it is inferred that Lesage, in transcribing from the supposed Spanish manuscript, left out the words “the Duke of Uzeda, son of,” for that nobleman was really turned out of office at the death of Philip III.

Moreover, the reasons given why Lesage claims to be the author of *Gil Blas*, but merely the translator of the *Bachelor of Salamanca*, are that the manuscript of the *Bachelor* “had been long in the possession of the Marquis de Lyonne and his son before it became his property ; and, although tolerably certain that it had never been diligently perused, the French author could not be sure that it had not attracted superficial notice, and that the name was not known to many people.” Then, after expressing “the tenderness to the friend and companion of our boyhood, and gratitude to him who has enlivened many an hour, and added so much to our stock of intellectual happiness,” the article in *Blackwood* ends by affirming that “the main fact contended for by M. Llorente—that is, the Spanish origin of *Gil Blas*—is undeniable ; and [that]

the subordinate and collateral points of his system [are] invested with a high degree of probability."

Before attempting to answer the objections brought against the French origin of *Gil Blas*, the opinions of a few literary men who were able and willing to judge that question may prepare the way for my own conclusions.

Villemain¹ refutes the accusation that Lesage was indebted for *Gil Blas* to a Spanish original. The argument is too long to quote entire, and the reader may be content with a short passage from the conclusion:—

"We do not mean entirely to repudiate the debt owing in this matter to Spain, but it is a different kind of indebtedness from what it has been described to be. Our *Gil Blas* is not stolen, whatever may have been said by Father Isla, and quite recently by the learned Llorente. No mysterious manuscript was found by Lesage and hidden from all the world; but doubtless he cleverly culled that rational pleasantry, that philosophy, grave yet sweet, sarcastic yet agreeable, which sparkles in Cervantes and in Quevedo, and whereof a few happy touches are always to be met with in the Spanish moralists and story-tellers. To this free and general imitation Lesage adds the savour of the best of antiquity: in his style he is the pupil of Terence and of Horace."

Another champion of Lesage's claim to the authorship of *Gil Blas* is Sir Walter Scott, who may certainly be accepted as a judge of a novel's claim to originality. This is what he says:²—

"Lesage's claim to originality in this delightful work (*Gil Blas*) has been idly, I had almost said ungratefully, contested by those critics, who conceive they detect a plagiarist wherever they see a resemblance in the general subject of a work, to one which has been before treated by an inferior artist. It is a favourite theme of laborious dulness to trace out such coincidences; because they appear to reduce genius of the higher order to the usual standard of humanity, and, of course, to bring the author nearer a level with his critics. . . . It is therefore no disparagement to Lesage, that long before his time there existed in other countries, and particularly in Spain, that species of fiction to which *Gil Blas* may be in some

¹ *Tableau de la littérature du XVIII^e Siècle*, lecture XI.

² Walter Scott's *Prose Works*, *Biographical Notice of Alain René le Sage*, vol. iii., 1834.

respects said to belong. . . . If Lesage borrowed anything from Spain, excepting some general hints . . . it may have been some of the detached novels, which, as in the *Diable Boiteux*, are interwoven in the history. . . . It is no doubt wonderful, that merely by dint of acquaintance with Spanish literature, Lesage should have become so perfectly intimate, as he is admitted to be on all hands, with the Spanish customs, manners and habits, as to conduct the reader through four volumes without once betraying the secret that the work was not composed by a native of Spain. . . . Lesage's capacity of identifying himself with the child of his imagination, in circumstances which he himself never was placed, though rare in the highest degree, is not altogether singular; De Foe, in particular, possessed it in a most extraordinary degree. It may be added, that this strict and accurate attention to costume is confined to externals, so far as the principal personage is concerned. Gil Blas, though wearing the Golillo, Capa, and Spada, with the most pure Castilian grace, thinks and acts with all the vivacity of a Frenchman, and displays, in many respects, the peculiar sentiments of one. . . . The whole concoction of *Gil Blas* appears to me as original, in that which constitutes the essence of a composition, as it is inexpressibly delightful."

One of the best Spanish scholars of modern times, the late Mr George Ticknor, says:—

"But there is a ready answer to all such conjectural criticism. Lesage proceeded, as an author in romantic fiction, just as he had done when he wrote for the public theatre; and the results at which he arrived in both cases are remarkably similar. In the drama he began with translations and imitations from the Spanish, such as his *Point of Honor*, which is taken from Roxas, and his *Don Cesar Ursino*, which is from Calderon; but afterwards, when he better understood his own talent and had acquired confidence from success, he came out with his *Turcaret*, a wholly original comedy, which far surpassed all he had before attempted, and showed how much he had been wasting his strength as an imitator. Just so he did in romance-writing. He began by translating the *Don Quixotte* of Avellaneda, and remodelling and enlarging the *Diablo Cojuelo* of Guevara. But the *Gil Blas*, the greatest of all his works in prose fiction, is the result of his confirmed strength; and, in its characteristic merits, is as much his own as the *Turcaret*.

"On this point the internal evidence is as decisive as the external. The frequent errors of this remarkable romance in Spanish geography and history show that it could hardly have been the work of a Spaniard, and certainly not of a Spaniard so well informed as Solis; its private anecdotes of society in the reigns of Louis the Fourteenth and Louis the Fifteenth prove it to have been almost necessarily written by a Frenchman; while, at the same time, the freedom with

which, as we go on, we find that everything Spanish is plundered—now a tale taken from *Marcos de Obregon*, now an intrigue or a story from a play of Mendoza, of Roxas, or of Figueroa—points directly to Lesage's old habits, and to his practised skill in turning to account everything that he deemed fitted to his purpose. The result is, that he has, by the force of his genius, produced a work of great brilliancy; in which, from his known familiarity with Spanish literature and his unscrupulous use of it, he has preserved the national character with such fidelity, that a Spaniard is almost always unwilling to believe that the *Gil Blas*, especially now that he has it in the spirited if not uniformly pure Castilian version of Father Isla, could have been written by anybody but one of his own countrymen.”¹

Finally, Mr George Saintsbury, already mentioned, concludes :

“When we dismiss merely hypothetical argument and examine the matter coolly, we find first that there is absolutely no external evidence that Lesage did in any way plagiarise *Gil Blas*; secondly, that there is overwhelming internal evidence that, while he made free use of his Spanish predecessors for details, for local colour and so forth, the essential part of the book is fairly his own.”

A late German author and well-known Spanish scholar, Charles Frederic Franceson, published in 1857 a pamphlet, written in French, *Essai sur la*

¹ *History of Spanish Literature*, 4th Edition, Boston, 1872, Vol. III., Period III., ch. iv. Mr Ticknor says in note 20 of the same chapter, “I have already noticed how much Lesage took from *Marcos de Obregon*, besides this the adventures of Don Rafael with the Seigneur de Moyadas in *Gil Blas* (bk. v. ch. 1), are taken from *Los Empeños del Mentir* of Mendoza—the story of the *Mariage de Vengeance* (bk. iv. ch. 4), is from the play of Roxas, *Casarse por Vengarse*—the story of Aurora de Guzman (bk. iv. ch. 5 and 6), from *Todo es enredos Amor*, by Diego de Cordoba y Figueroa. . . . *Le Point d'Honneur* is from *No hay Amigo para Amigo*, which is the first play in the Comedias de Roxas, 1680; and *Don César Ursin* is from *Peor esta que estaba*, in Calderon, Comedias, 1763, Tom. III. . . . But of this free use of Spanish fiction, which Lesage took no pains to conceal, the proof is abundant. . . . In his *Bachelier de Salamanque* Lesage goes one step further. On the title-page of this romance, first printed three years after the last volume of *Gil Blas* appeared, he says expressly that ‘it is translated from a Spanish manuscript,’ and yet the story of Dona Cintia de la Carrera, in the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth chapters, is taken from Moreto's *Desden con el Desden*, a play as well known as any in Spanish literature;—so bold and careless was he in his literary larcenies.”

Question de l'Originalité de Gil Blas, in which he defends Lesage against the accusations of Llorente. In this essay he argues that *The Bachelor of Salamanca*, being published after *Gil Blas*, can only be called a weakened reflex of the earlier written novel; that there are as many Spanish words and phrases in Lesage's avowed translations, *Le Diable Boiteux*, *Guzman d'Alfarache*, and *Estevanille Gonsalez*, as in *Gil Blas*; and that Spanish words have not always an equivalent in French, so that *pré* is not the same as *prado*, *maire* as *corregidor*, &c. He further observes that even Voltaire, who did not know Spanish well, in the first two chapters of his *Histoire de Jenni*, &c., of which the action takes place at Barcelona, employs a certain number of allegorical names, indicating the character or profession of the personages to which they belong, such as Donna Boca Vermeja (ruddy mouth), Don Inigo y Mendrozo (coward), and some others. He also states that the assertion that Lesage sometimes writes *Juan*, *Pedro*, and similar Spanish names, and sometimes *Jean*, *Pierre* in French, is not quite correct. The novelist always employs Spanish names when they are written differently from French ones, and often accompanies them by *Don*; but when they are identical, or nearly so, in both languages, he writes the French form, as *Don Gaston*, *don Alphonse*, *don Louis*, *don Felix*. *Dom* is not the equivalent of the Spanish *Don*, but is applied in French to certain members of religious orders; *dame* and *maître* are used by Molière in *L'Avare*, as *dame Claude*, *maître Jacques*; *seigneur* and *cavalier* are only written to give local colouring to *Gil Blas*; the four lines which Don Gaston de Cogollos sings are possibly taken from a Spanish author, whilst the misspelling of proper

names, towns, places, &c., is probably owing to printers' errors or to carelessness. M. Franceson gives also in his pamphlet the translation of all the passages which Lesage has borrowed from Espinel's *Marcos de Obregon*, and a list of Spanish authors laid under contribution by the French novel-writer, as well as the original passages of Firenzuola's Italian translation of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, from which Gil Blas' adventures in the cave of the robbers have been taken.

Though it seems ridiculous to treat a novel like an historical work, and to verify every date on which certain actions of the hero are supposed to have taken place, *The Chronology of the Life of Gil Blas*, as given by M. Llorente, is incorrect. Gil Blas left Oviedo when he was seventeen years old (bk. i. ch. 1), and about six months afterwards Donna Mencia de Mosquera relates to him that her husband died seven years ago, when the Portuguese army was at Fez (bk. i. ch. 11), As Don Sebastian, King of Portugal, went in 1578 with an army to Morocco, where he was killed the same year, Donna Mencia must have spoken in 1585; therefore Gil Blas was born in 1568, and not in 1588, as Llorente says. Then arises the difficulty of explaining how, some time after Donna Mencia's adventure, and after Portugal had been annexed to Spain in 1580, the master of Gil Blas, Don Bernard de Castil-Blazo, could pass for a spy of the King of Portugal (bk. iii. ch. 1), and how Don Pompeyo de Castro could mention a King of Portugal when no such monarch existed—Lesage, in the later editions of *Gil Blas*, altered this potentate into a King of Poland (bk. iii. ch. 7)—and how Captain Rolando could say to Gil Blas (bk. iii. ch. 2) that, when he entered the town of Leon, the people would not have been more eager to see him if he had

been a Portuguese general taken prisoner in war. Moreover, Gil Blas was imprisoned in the tower of Segovia a few months before the dismissal of the Duke of Lerma, which took place in 1618. Our hero was then fifty years old, and married Antonia some time afterwards. When the Count-Duke of Olivarez was exiled in 1643, Gil Blas would be more than seventy: yet nothing daunted, he returns to his estate after the count's death in 1646, calls himself a man "who begins to grow old," marries again, twenty-eight years after his first marriage, a young lady between nineteen and twenty, and begets two children, "of whom he devoutly believes himself to be the father."

Obviously any literary man, before beginning to write a work like *Gil Blas*, and before narrating the events of such an adventurous career at a distinct period of history and in a particular country, would consult the different travels and descriptions of the land in which his story takes place—would, so to speak, try to assimilate himself with the natives, and, by dint of reading and studying, become, as it were, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.

We may suppose that Lesage, whose intellect was decidedly not below the average, did so, for before the first two volumes of *Gil Blas* made their appearance in 1715, there had been already published many books of travel in Spain, as well as particular descriptions of the different kingdoms, provinces, and towns of that monarchy, eleven of which were printed in Spanish, three in Latin, eighteen in French, two in English, and one in German,¹ though I do not think our author understood these two last languages. He most likely read and studied these books until he became thoroughly

¹ See Boucher de la Richarderie, *Bibliothèque des Voyages*, 1808.

percolated with Spanish habits and manners, and could impart true Spanish flavour to his style. In order to convince myself that I was not wrong in my surmise, I carefully examined the following works, and often have referred in the notes of the present edition of *Gil Blas* to some of their passages, though these works are merely a fifth of those given by La Richarderie.

1. *Inventaire général des plus curieuses recherches des royaumes d'Espagne par Salazar, traduit de l'Espagnol.* Paris, 1615.

2. *Relation d'un Voyage d'Espagne où est exactement décrit l'Estat de la Cour de ce Royaume et de son Gouvernement.* Paris, 1664. This work is attributed in the *Bibliothèque des Voyages* to a certain M. Brisel.

3. *Relation de Madrid.* Cologne, 1665.

*4. *Voyage d'Espagne (fait en 1655) contenant, entre plusieurs particularités de ce royaume, trois discours politiques sur les affaires du protecteur d'Angleterre, de la reine de Suède et du duc de Lorraine, avec une Relation de l'état et gouvernement de cette monarchie, et une Relation particulière de Madrid.* Cologne, P. Marteau, 1666. M. de la Richarderie mentions only the Paris edition of 1720, under the title of *Voyage d'Espagne Historique et Politique*. The *Voyage* was written in French by a Dutch diplomatist, F. Aarsens van Sommelsdyck, who was drowned in crossing from England to Holland; the *Relation de Madrid*, by Saint Maurice, appears to be the same as the one mentioned in No. 3, but contains an additional chapter on the Revenues of the Spanish King.

5. *Relation du Voyage en Espagne.* La Haye, Van Bulderen, 1693. This book was written by the

Countess d'Aulnoy, and the third edition was printed at the Hague; the first edition appeared in Paris in 1690.

6. *Journal du Voyage d'Espagne, contenant une description fort exacte de ses Royaumes et de ses principales villes, avec l'Estat de Gouvernement, et plusieurs Traittés curieux touchant les Régences, les Assemblées des Etats, l'Ordre de la Noblesse, la Dignité de Grand d'Espagne, les Commanderies, les Bénéfices et les Conseils.* Paris, 1669. At the end of it is printed the *Relation*, mentioned in No. 2. These two works are by Mr Bertault, who, in 1659, accompanied the Marshal de Gramont, sent to Spain to ask for the hand of the Infanta Maria Theresa for the youthful Louis XIV. At the end of this *Journal* is the *Relation de Madrid*, mentioned in No. 4, as well as the chapter on the Revenues of the King of Spain. The *Journal* contains also a translation of a Spanish manuscript-narrative of the sitting of the States at Madrid in 1584.

Besides these works I have also consulted the *Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne*: Paris, 1690, written by the Countess d'Aulnoy; the *Mémoires Curieux envoyez de Madrid, etc.*, at the end of which is printed *Sur les Proverbes et autres façons de parler qui sont particulières à l'Espagne*, and a *Dissertation sur le Génie des Espagnols pour les Lettres, etc.*: Paris, 1670; De Vayrac, *Etat présent de l'Espagne*, 4 vols., 1718; *Voyages faits en divers temps en Espagne, en Portugal, en Allemagne, en France et ailleurs par Monsieur M * * **: Amsterdam, 1699; and several other works, mentioned in Johann George Meusel's *Bibliotheca Historica*, vol. vi., part i., Leipzig, 1793, such as: Juan Alvarez de Colmenar, *Délices d'Espagne et de Portugal*: Amsterdam, 1707; L. Coulon, *le*

fidèle Conducteur pour le Voyage d'Espagne montrant exactement les raretez et choses Remarquables qui si trouvent en chaques Villes, et les distances d'icelles, avec un dénombrement des distances qui s'y sont données: Paris, 1654; P. Du Val, geographer in ordinary to the King, *La description et l'Alphabet d'Espagne et de Portugal*: Paris 1669; and five histories of Madrid, all written in Spanish, and published between the years 1623 and 1658.

(a) Lesage acquired his knowledge of the habits and customs of Spain (see Nos. 1-7, pages xvii.-xx.) in some of the books mentioned. The travelling by mules and the filthy state of the beds is spoken of in the *Journal*, &c.: *Le samedi quatrième d'octobre, ayant changé de mules, je partis de Pampelone, ayant acheté des draps à cause de la malpropreté des lits*.¹ The same work speaks of the subterranean caves in Castile, where it is said "the Spaniards retired during the time of the Moors,"—though Lesage places the cave of Rolando in the Asturias, — and of the bull-fights "at Erija, five leagues from Fuentes . . . where there were four noblemen (*Caballeros en Plaza*), who fought all dressed in black, and with feathers in their hats." The Countess d'Aulnoy² describes also at full length a bull-fight which took place at Madrid in 1679, where six noble knights were engaged, and she mentions another fight in her *Mémoires*.³ In her *Relation*⁴ she employs the phrase *réciter le rosaire*, and says that all the Spanish ladies had one *attaché à leur ceinture*. This book gives also many examples of the tricks of inn-keepers in Spain. The leathern bag of wine is spoken

¹ *Journal du Voyage d'Espagne*, &c. Paris, 1669.

² *Relation du Voyage en Espagne*. Paris, 1690. *Lettre X*.

³ *Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne*. Paris, 1690.

⁴ *Lettre VIII*.

of by her :¹ "The wine is put in prepared goat-skins, and it always smells of pitch or burning." Another book of travels² says that "they (the Spaniards) have no other casks but goat-skins, which they call *Bollegos*, and which are so pitched that when I drink I seem to swallow the awl (*le Saint Crespín*) of a shoemaker." The Countess, in speaking of the condemned to death, states :³ *Les lois du royaume de Valence . . . accordent quelques jours aux criminels après qu'ils ont été jugés.* Lesage says that this law existed also in Leon. The particular bull allowing the Spanish kings to appoint archbishops is spoken of by Lenglet du Fresnoy,⁴ who says : *Le Roi seul, en vertu d'Indults du Saint Siège, nomme aux évêchés en Espagne.* What *indults* are is to be found in Richelet's Dictionary, 1719 : *Il y a deux sortes d'indults, actifs et passifs. Les indults actifs donnent le pouvoir de nommer et présenter des bénéfices et de les conférer. Les papes accordent ces indults aux Princes, aux Cardinaux, aux Archevêques, Evêques et autres Pré-lats.* M. Llorente also pretends that the use of chocolate was unknown in France at the time Lesage wrote *Gil Blas* ; but Brillat-Savarin, in his *Physiologie du Goût*,⁵ says : "During the beginning of the Regency (1715-1723), chocolate was in more general use than coffee ; because it was then taken as an agreeable nourishment, whilst coffee was only looked upon as a curious and extravagant drink."

(b) The words and passages in *Gil Blas*, evidently translated from the Spanish (see No. 8, page xviii.), and which are said not to be French, were partly used, as

¹ *Lettre IX.*

² *Relation de Madrid.* Cologne, 1665.

³ *Mémoires de la Cour de Espagne.*

⁴ *Méthode pour étudier la Géographie.* Vol. VI. 1716.

⁵ *Méditation VI.* Section 2, § 10.

M. Franceson has already stated, to give a local colouring to the original, and are, as such, found in some of the books of travels which have been mentioned. The Countess d'Aulnoy¹ uses *Señor cordonnier, hidalgos, señor escudero, oidor, l'Hôpital de los Niños, la famosa comedia*. Van Sommelsdyck,² says also, *Entre eux ils se traitent de Señores Cavalleros*.² Lesage appears not always to have lodged the actors in the *posadas de los representantes* (see No. 9, page xviii.), for Laura relates to Gil Blas that Phenicia lived "with the whole troop in a large *hôtel garni*" (bk. vii. ch. 7).

(c) The dinner-hour was twelve o'clock in Paris as well as in Madrid (see No. 5, page xvii.). Boileau, in his third Satire, written in 1665, the very year of Philip IV.'s death, says that, "coming from Mass, P. hastens to a dinner to which he was invited, just as the clock struck twelve."

(d) Llorente accuses Lesage of not knowing his own language (see No. 11, page xix.), or, in other words, of introducing Spanish expressions into French.³ This accusation is totally wrong. Nearly all of the words or phrases quoted as not French are to be found in Richelet's Dictionary, of which the third edition, which I have consulted, was published in 1719. There we

¹ *Relation du Voyage en Espagne.*

² *Voyage d'Espagne fait en 1655, &c.* Cologne, 1666.

³ Llorente, who published his *Observations* in French, as well as in Spanish, was himself not a good writer of the first language. He ends the preface to his book as follows: "*La nation française a tant de gloires littéraires qu'elle n'a pas besoin de celle d'avoir donné l'origine au roman de Gil Blas; elle ne perd rien parce que Le Sage ne serait pas le créateur de cet ouvrage; il sera toujours regardé comme un bon compositeur qui sut très-bien choisir les matériaux espagnols pour sa composition, en sorte que Le Sage, pendant sa vie, fut bien autorisé à dire et la France l'est aujourd'hui comme M. le Comte (de Neufchâteau) l'écrivit: Furto latamur in ipso.*" (We are proud of the robbery itself), which is a sentence of San-teuil, and put by Lesage into the mouth of the literary compiler, the illustrious Don Ignacio (bk. x. ch. 12).

see *cavalier* described as *gentilhomme qui porte l'épée*; *seigneur*, sometimes used *en riant*, as *Seigneurs Chevaliers Catalans*; *à Dieu ne plaise*; *grâces à Dieu*, though not *au ciel*; but, says the French lexicographer, *cette expression est basse*; *rendre grâces*, *rendre des actions de grâces*, though not *rendre de tres-humbles grâces*; *femme de bien et d'honneur*. Richelet has also *famille*, *viceroy*, *bénéfice simple*; he defines *laboureur* as *celui qui cultive la terre avec la charue* (*sic*), and gives as an example *un riche laboureur*, which expression Lesage likewise uses (*Gil Blas*, bk. v. ch. 1), and which evidently cannot mean "a rich day-labourer," as Llorente thinks it does. *Disciple*, spelled *diciple*, is defined as *écolier*; *fameux*, which, according to Llorente, no Frenchman would use in the sense of *célèbre*, was, according to Richelet, precisely employed with that meaning in Lesage's time. Llorente says about the word *directeur*: "Only a Spaniard, or at least some one who has lived a long time in Spain, can know the difference between a monk who is only seen in the confessional, and a very reverend father, of the 'Cordon Alto,' of the 'Haut Cordon,' who is called spiritual director of consciences, and whom the devotees treat to pigeons, partridges, and other little dainty dishes." In Richelet's Dictionary *directeur* is defined as the "ordinary confessor of a person," and the two following lines are quoted from Boileau's tenth *Satire*: "But of all mortals, thanks to the pious souls, none is so well cared for as a *directeur de femmes*." The Countess d'Aulnoy says in her *Relation du Voyage en Espagne*:¹ "M. Mellini, the Apostolic Nuncio, consecrated the *patriarche des Indes* on Trinity, and the king was present."

¹ *Lettre X.*

(e) The local knowledge of Spanish towns displayed by Lesage (see No. 12, page xix.) might easily have been acquired; for in d'Aulnoy's *Relation*, in the thirteenth letter, the Countess says: "We went to hear mass in the Church de Los Reys at Toledo."¹ The *Maison des Repenties*, to which Sirena is sent (*Gil Blas*, bk. ix. ch. 7), may have been anywhere; the Countess d'Aulnoy speaks of one in her *Relation*. In this book she four times also mentions the existence of a convent, *Las Descalzas Reales*, called by Lesage, *Monastère de l' Incarnation*, where the widows and mistresses of the Kings of Spain used to retire. In her third letter she says: "Philip IV. preferred Maria Calderona to a young lady of noble birth who was in attendance on the Queen, and who was so hurt by the fickleness of the King, whom she really loved, and by whom she had a son, that she withdrew to *Las Descalzas Reales*, where she became a nun. . . . The King sent word to La Calderona that she had to go in a nunnery, as it is the custom when the King quits his mistress." In the ninth letter the Countess writes: "This order of the Carmelites is held here in great veneration. Even Queens, when they become widows, are obliged to spend with them the rest of their lives. Don Juan—himself an illegitimate son of Philip IV. has an illegitimate daughter who is a Carmelite nun. She is wonderfully beautiful, and it is said that she did not wish to take the veil; but it was her destiny, and so it is the fate of many others of her rank, who are scarcely more satisfied about it than she was. These nuns are called *Descalzas Reales*, which means 'royal ladies.' This rule applies even to the King's mistresses, whether they are unmarried or widows. When he

¹ Llorente says the knowledge of the Church de los Reyes at Toledo est une des preuves irrécusables de l'existence d'un manuscrit espagnol.

ceases to love them, they must become nuns." The Countess repeats this in her fifteenth and last letter, and also in her *Mémoires*. The knowledge that there was such a convent, says the author of the article in *Blackwood*, is "a still stronger argument in favour of the existence of a Spanish manuscript." Calling the Prado of Madrid by its right name, and quoting the *Rue des Infantes*, is not singular, considering that there were several guide-books of Madrid, printed before *Gil Blas* was published.¹ The mention of so many provinces, large and small towns, and villages of Spain, is not marvellous, as many geographical hand-books of Spain, written in Latin,² as well as Colmenar's *Délices, d'Espagne et de Portugal*, 1707, translated into French, had been published before *Gil Blas* saw the light. A large number of these names are also given in the books of travels in Spain, already mentioned. The titles of the dukes, counts, and celebrated persons to be found in *Gil Blas*, may be discovered in d'Aulnoy's *Voyage*, in her *Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne*, in Salazar's *Inventaire*,³ and in many other works.⁴ I find in the *Inventaire* alone, the names of the nobles, their residences and incomes, with a list of archbishops and bishops, viscounts, generals, admirals, priors, com-

¹ In the *Bibliothèque des Voyages* is quoted :—*Theatro de las grandezas de la Villa de Madrid*, etc. As already stated, Meusel gives the titles of four other histories of that town.

² Echofius' *Deliciae Hispaniae*, 1604 ; and *Deliciae apodemicae*, Ens. 1609, both describing Spain, and both starting from Toledo.

³ Salazar, *Inventaire général des plus curieuses recherches des royaumes d'Espagne, traduit de l'Espagnol*. Paris, 1615.

⁴ Carillo, *Origen de la dignidad de Grande de Castilla*, Madrid, 1657 ; Salazar de Mendoza, *Origen de las dignidades seglares de Castilla y Leon* : Madrid, 1657 ; Imhof's *Historia Italiae et Hispaniae Genealogica*, 1702 ; and *Recherches généalogiques sur les grandeurs d'Espagne*, 1707.

manderies; and also of the councils and councillors, presidents, auditors, secretaries, and other officers, with an account of the manner in which they were appointed, and a statement of their different incomes. In this little book are likewise given lists of the officers of the king's household, their salaries and pensions; and at the end of it a table showing the distances between various towns and villages. In the Countess's *Mémoires* there is a list of the archbishops, bishops, and different *grandees* of Spain; she also relates the history of the Admirante of Castile, a title abolished when Lesage wrote, but not when the Countess penned her book. To say that forty-five Spanish names, such as those of Mrs Slipslop and Parson Trulliber (see No. 13, page xix.), were not likely to be invented by any but a Spaniard, seems to me to be forgetting that Lesage was an accomplished Spanish scholar; but, even if he were "only acquainted with the lighter part of Spanish literature," he might easily have compounded these names.

The orthographical mistakes (see No. 1, page xx.) are, as Mr Franceson has already observed, chiefly printer's errors or faults of carelessness; many words, such as *Contador*, *Miajadas*, *Majuelo*, and *Pliego*, being rightly spelt in the early, but incorrectly in the later editions of *Gil Blas*. The supposed error of Lesage in imagining *seigneur*, *Señor*, and *seigneurie*, *Señoría* to be equivalent, and on which so much stress has been laid by M. Llorente, as proving that the French author must have plagiarised from a Spanish manuscript, without understanding what he did (see No. 2, page xx.), is no error at all.¹ Lesage

¹ Llorente says distinctly about the use of the word *seigneurie*: *Lesage n'entendait pas même ce qu'il copiait.*

uses the word *seigneurie* in *Gil Blas* twelve times :—

1°. When speaking of the actresses who treat great lords familiarly, and who, far from addressing them as *Excellences*, *ne leur donnaient pas même de la seigneurie* (bk. iii. ch. 10).

2°. Don Rodrigo de Calderon calls Gil Blas, *Seigneur de Santillane*, “he,” says Gil Blas, “who had never yet addressed me in any other way but as *vous, sans jamais se servir du terme de seigneurie.*” (bk. viii. ch. 5).

3°. Don Roger de Rada, when relating his adventures, says to Gil Blas, *de peur d’ennuyer votre seigneurie* (bk. viii. ch. 8).

4°. Fabricio addresses Gil Blas as *seigneur de Santillane*, and then as “*seigneur*, I am delighted with the prosperity of your *seigneurie* ;” upon which Gil Blas replies, “*Oh ! que diable ! trêve de seigneur et de seigneurie !*” (bk. viii. ch. 9).

5°. As love messenger of the Prince of Spain, Gil Blas is addressed by the Señora Mencia as *votre seigneurie* (bk. viii. ch. 10).

6°. Gil Blas says of himself, “Gabriel Salero thought that he had found in *ma seigneurie* the best match in Spain for his daughter” (bk. ix. ch. 1).

7°. Gil Blas addresses Señor Manuel Ordoñez : “My friend Fabricio would have done much better to remain with your *seigneurie* than to cultivate poetry” (bk. x. ch. 2).

8°. In stopping at the house of Don Alphonso de Leyva at Valencia, Gil Blas relates : “I found in my room a good bed, on which my *seigneurie* having laid down, fell asleep” (bk. x. ch. 5).

9°. Joseph Navarro says to Gil Blas : “My master

has promised to speak for you to the Count of Olivarez *sur le bien que je lui ai dit de votre seigneurie*" (bk. xi. ch. 3).

10°. Scipio addresses Gil Blas: "You see that fortune has great designs on *votre seigneurie*" (bk. xi. ch. 6).

11°. The dancing-master, Martin Ligerio, says to Gil Blas: "I have been told that it is *votre seigneurie* who selects the masters for my lord Don Henry" (bk. xii. ch. 5).

12°. Scipio declares to Gil Blas: "I like better a good office with *votre seigneurie* than to be again exposed to the perils of the sea" (bk. xii. ch. 6).

In none of these cases can *seigneurie* mean *señoría*, a title only given to Spanish grandees. In the first two examples Lesage uses the word rightly, as it was then employed in French for "the title given by the estate." In the last ten examples he seems to apply this expression *en riant*, or for the sake of civility.¹

(*f*) The anecdote about the rector of the University of Salamanca (see No. 3, page xx) is certainly not in accordance with Spanish manners; but this only shows that, however careful an author may be, the difficulties of letting the scenes of a novel take place

¹ Richelet, in his dictionary, defines *seigneurie* as *une terre seigneuriale*, and quotes from Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes* (Act I. sc. 1) Chrysalde's lines to Arnolphe, who had adopted the name of Monsieur de la Souche:—

Que diable vous a fait aussi vous aviser
A quarante et deux ans de vous débaptiser,
Et d'un vieux tronc pourri de votre métairie
Vous faire dans le monde un nom de seigneurie.

Richelet says also "*seigneurie* is used *en riant*, and has the same meaning as *signoria* among the Italians when they speak to a person civilly;" and then he quotes from Molière's *Sganarelle ou le Cocu Imaginaire*: "*Très humble serviteur à votre seigneurie.*"

on foreign ground, must some time or other induce him to commit an error.¹

(g) The accusation of the many topographical errors to be found in *Gil Blas* (see No. 4, page xx.), of which the enumeration is borrowed from Llorente, and which errors are partly reproduced by *Blackwood*, has been accepted by all Lesage's defenders as well founded. But, if they had consulted two maps of Spain—a large one, *Carte nouvelle du royaume d'Espagne, dédiée à Sa Majesté Catholique Philippe V.*, Paris, 1705; and a smaller one, *L'Espagne divisée en tous ses royaumes, principautés, &c., à l'usage de Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne*, Amsterdam, 1710—they would have found that Lesage was nearly always right. Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, Betancos, Rodillas, Grajal (bk. i. ch. 11), Moyados,² Valpuesta (bk. ii. ch. 9), Luceno³ (bk. iii. ch. 2), Villardesa and Almodabar (bk. iv. ch. 11)—spelled on the large map Villardssaz and Almodovar, on the small map Villardesaz and Almodavar—Castil Blazo⁴ (bk. v. ch. 1),

¹ It is astonishing to find in the fifteenth chapter of the *Voyage d'Espagne*, by Aarsens van Sommelsdyck, "*La veuve chez laquelle nous étions logés était ivre, sur quoi je dirai qu'en Allemagne je n'ai pas vu tant de femmes qui se soulassent que j'en ai rencontré au deçà des Pyrénées.*" The Countess d'Aulnoy says, however, in the eighth letter of the *Relation*,—*Ils (the Spaniards) sont d'une retenue surprenante sur le vin. . . . L'on ne saurait leur faire un plus sensible outrage que de les accuser d'être ivres.*

² Moyados, a village in the province of Valladolid, in the former kingdom of Old Castille, must not be mistaken for Moyadas, a town in the present province of Badajoz, in Estremadura (*Gil Blas*, bk. v. ch. 1), and which Llorente says ought to be Miajadas. The small map gives Moyadas; the large one Mihajada.

³ Llorente says in his *Observations*, "*Il n'y a eu en Espagne aucun village du nom de Luceno.*"

⁴ Llorente writes: "*Le traducteur Isla s'est permis d'omettre les mots (Castil-Blazo), parce qu'il savait bien qu'il n'y avait point de pays de ce nom en Espagne.*" M. Llorente does not mean by *pays*, country, but village.

Llirias (bk. ix. ch. 10), Melilla, Toralva (bk. v. ch. 1), Ponte de Duero (bk. ii. ch. 8), are all in their right places and well spelt, whilst Almerin (bk. v. ch. 1), which ought to have been Almoharin according to M. Llorente, is printed so on the small map, but figures on the large one as Lmorin, with the usual sign of a town before it, which makes it look like Almorin. All these names were not altered in later editions, but are to be found in the edition of *Gil Blas*, published in three volumes, Paris, 1721, and also in the first one in four volumes, Paris, 1735, except that Carrillo—another of Lesage's supposed misspellings discovered by M. Llorente—was correctly printed in the edition of 1721, but with only one *r* in that published fourteen years later. Lesage's Orbisa (bk. x. ch. 10) ought to be Cobisa. Peñafiel is mentioned as lying on the road from Segovia to Valladolid (bk. x. ch. 1); "this ought to be Portillo," says Llorente, "because Valladolid is twelve leagues from Peñafiel, and therefore it is impossible to arrive there in one day." Portillo is certainly on the road between Valladolid and Segovia, but it seems not impossible to go twelve leagues when one has, like Gil Blas, *une chaise tirée par deux bonnes mules*. But M. Llorente is difficult to please. When Gil Blas leaves Oviedo, after his father's death, and continues his journey (bk. x. ch. 8), *à petites journées*, our Spanish critic observes that a carriage drawn by two mules ought not to go at so slow a pace. The blunder of placing Alcala de Henarez on the road from Madrid to Segovia seems to be the French author's own. The author of the article in *Blackwood* asks, "If Lesage had invented the story, and clothed it with names of Spanish cities and villages, taken from *printed* books,

can any one suppose that he would have fallen into all these errors?" It has been proved that they are not errors of Lesage, but of M. Llorente; though, in justice to this gentleman, it ought to be stated that several of the towns mentioned by the French author are not found on modern maps.

(h) In a novel, even a so-called historical one, errors are generally found; how much more are these, then, to be expected in a tale like *Gil Blas*? Lesage attempted to correct one of these errors which occurs in the history related by Don Pompeyo de Castro, by transferring the scene from Portugal to Poland, "but how comes it to pass," asks the author of the article in *Blackwood*, "that Lesage, who singles out with such painful anxiety the error to which we have adverted, suffers others of equal importance to pass altogether unnoticed?" (See No. 5, page xx.) This assertion is not quite correct, for the following notice prefaced the edition of *Gil Blas* of 1735:—

"In the third volume an epoch is mentioned (the time of the flight of Laura with Zendono to Portugal) which does not agree with the history of Don Pompeyo de Castro, to be found in the first volume (bk. iii. ch. 7). It appears that Philip the Second had not yet conquered Portugal,¹ and we see here suddenly this kingdom under the sway of Philip the Third,² without *Gil Blas* being much the older for it. This is a chronological error which the author has perceived too late, but which he promises to correct later, as well as many others, if ever a new edition of his works should appear."

He corrected this fault there and then, and left the others to be altered afterwards. But in 1735 Lesage was sixty-seven years old, and increasing infirmities and other literary labours probably prevented him from

¹ The Duke of Alba conquered Portugal in 1580. (Original note of Lesage.)

² Philip III. began to reign in 1598, and died in 1621. (Original note of Lesage.)

accomplishing what he intended. To argue from this—as is done in *Blackwood's Magazine*—that Lesage left “to posterity a lasting and unequivocal proof of his plagiarism . . . by dwelling on one anachronism as an error which he intended to correct, in a work swarming in every part with others equally flagrant, of which he takes no notice,” is, to say the least of it, a general accusation, which requires further substantiation than the remark that these mistakes were those “into which the original author had fallen, and which, as his object was not to give an exact relation of facts, he probably disregarded altogether.” However, what is excusable in a Spaniard must equally be so in a Frenchman.

(i) In extenuation of the errors of Lesage himself (see No. 6, page xx.) may be brought forward the remark about these being mistakes “which the original author . . . probably disregarded altogether.” There was a lapse of fourteen years between the publication of the third and fourth volumes of *Gil Blas*, and therefore Lesage may well have forgotten that the hero of his novel, after having left the tower of Segovia, says to Don Alphonso de Leyva, in the third volume, that “four months ago he occupied an important post at Court” (bk. ix. ch. 10); and may have allowed Gil Blas to tell the King in the first book of the fourth volume, that “he had been six months in prison” (bk. xi. ch. 2). That Lesage was very negligent in writing his fourth volume, is also proved by the supposed age of the hero of his novel, as compared with his birth and adventures, described in the first three volumes. The error of mentioning the dismissal of the Duke of Lerma, when Philip III. died, instead of saying, “the Duke of Uzeda, son of the Duke of Lerma,” can only be accounted for by carelessness, for Lesage speaks

rightly of the exile of the Duke of Uzeda in another part of *Gil Blas* (bk. xi. ch. 5). It seems to have been a fancy of our author to call Valcancel Valcazar ; for the whole history of Don Henri de Guzman was published in many books well known at the time Lesage wrote.

(j) M. Franceson has already stated that *The Bachelor of Salamanca*, published after *Gil Blas*, is a weakened reproduction of this last novel. Mr Ticknor, one of the best Spanish scholars of modern times, says, in his *History of Spanish Literature*, that two chapters of *The Bachelor* are taken from Moreto's play, *Desden con el Desden*, whilst Sainte-Beuve maintains that several chapters are borrowed from Ths. Gage, the English American, *His Travail by Sea and by Land ; or a New Survey of the West Indies, containing a Journall of three thousand and three hundred miles within the main land of America*, &c. London, 1648, which was translated into French by Le Sieur de Beaulieu, H. O'Neil (i.e., A. Baillet), Paris, 1677. It becomes, therefore, difficult to see how *The Bachelor* can have formed part of an original Spanish manuscript long in the possession of the Marquis de Lyonne and his son, as a great deal of the French work appears to have been borrowed from printed books, one of them not even translated into Spanish.¹ Llorente and *Blackwood* both mention that two-thirds of *Gil Blas* are taken from well-known Spanish works. If, therefore, Lesage copied *Gil Blas* from a manuscript of de Solis, that manuscript was chiefly com-

¹ In justice to M. Llorente it ought to be stated that he says in his *Observations*, ch. i. : " *On pourrait bien soutenir que Lesage est l'auteur original d'une grande partie du Bachelier, beaucoup plus qu'il ne le fut du Gil Blas.*"

posed of plagiarisms, and the Spanish author must have been more stupid than men ordinarily are to steal from books so well known in Spain and to his contemporaries. There is not the shadow of a proof that Lesage pilfered his world-famed novel from a manuscript. The readers of this Introductory Notice will have seen how our author became possessed of his intimate knowledge of Spain, and may also have perceived that his French was not quite so bad as M. Llorente wishes to prove it, and that his errors were neither so manifold, nor so clearly the faults of a copyist, as his literary enemies have maintained.

Gil Blas has already several times been translated into English, a very difficult task on account of the idiomatic style of the original. I have no intention to cavil at anything that my predecessors have done, but once and for all state that I have never scrupled to adopt any expression, turn of thought, or even page, from any version, whenever I found I could not improve upon it.

The oldest of these translations is anonymous, and is called *The History and Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane*. The first three volumes were published by J. & R. Tonson, London, 1737; the fourth in 1742 by J. Nourse, at the *Lamb* without *Temple Bar*, and T. Cogan, at the *Middle-Temple Gate* in Fleet Street. It was reprinted by Messrs Willison & Darling, Edinburgh, 1771.

The next translation of *Gil Blas* is said to have been done by Smollett, and was published in 1755.

Another translation of *Gil Blas* was, according to Lowndes' *Bibliographica Britannica*, made by P. Proctor, and published in 1774; but I have not been able to get a look at this work.

The next, *The Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillana*, newly translated from the French of A. R. Le Sage, by Martin Smart, embellished with one hundred copper-plates, was published by R. Phillips, 1807, and began with a Preface of which we take the following extracts :—

“There have been two translations ; the earliest (which is anonymous, and has its fourth edition dated 1737), and that which passes under the name of Smollett. The style of the Author is an exquisite model of its kind ; pure, concise, and at the same time easy in a high degree, yet in reality bearing marks of much attentive correction : but his translators have contrived so strangely to disfigure it, that it is very doubtful whether any similar example of equal misrepresentation could be found : scarcely was ever Homer burlesqued, or Virgil travestied, more broadly. The first of these performances is a ludicrous instance, how contemptible a book *may* be made to appear by translation. Every page of it abounds with perverse violations of grammar, and the most gross vulgarities. . . . From Smollett’s version it is unnecessary to select illustrations, as that is at present in general use : it may be sufficient to mention, that his very first page of the *Adventures* contains a coarse expression, and a gratuitous allusion approaching to indecency. A perusal of his volumes with a view to this point cannot fail to convince the least critical reader of the lowness of diction that runs through the whole. . . . Besides its general tenor, there are striking and exclusive features in the style of *Gil Blas* ; not less so, though of a ‘very different kind, than in that of *Sterne* among ourselves. The Author continually writes in insinuations and inuendoes ; leaving something, often much, to be inferred or discovered by the reader : and, in particular, avails himself admirably of this practice to cover his severest satire, or pass delicately over ideas the least susceptible of strong or undisguised enunciation. These inuendoes, however, both the former translators take pleasure in solving ; to save their readers trouble, or sometimes from want of dexterity for adopting them with equal happiness. . . . I beg leave to say a few words concerning the execution of the present translation. It formed part of the plan on which it was undertaken to suppress or soften as much as possible everything objectionable in point of expression or sentiment ; and this has accordingly been done to as great an extent as the particular passages seemed to allow.”

The last original translation was made by Benjamin Heath Malkin, Esqre., M.A., F.S.A., and was published in four volumes by Messrs Longman, Hurst, Rees &

Orme, in 1809; the excellent plates, designed by Smirke, generally accompany this edition, which is preceded by the following Advertisement:—

“On the occasion of producing a splendid English edition of *Gil Blas*, the publishers would gladly have adopted the translation published under the name of Smollett. The defects of that version are acknowledged; and it is now understood to be indebted to that popular writer only for his name. Under these circumstances, it has been the aim of the present translator to produce a more easy and spirited transcript of the original; with what ability and success must be left to the reader to determine.”

“All these translations have been often reprinted; the one of Smollett appears to have been most generally in demand.”

Generally the proper names used in this translation of *Gil Blas* have been printed in their Spanish form, for though Lesage wrote his novel in French, and sketched not seldom characters well known in Paris during his lifetime, he has given it on the whole a strong Ausonian colouring. Wherever Lesage has made an error I have endeavoured to correct it, if possible, and have drawn the reader's attention to it by a footnote. I have also attempted to elucidate any difficulties by notes, culled from different works, generally of or before the period Lesage wrote; whilst others are borrowed from the former translations, or from original editions.

Gil Blas has been translated, I believe, into nearly all European languages. It has, besides, been freely imitated. There are two German works with the title *Gil Blas*, one written by M. Hertzberg, the other by the Baron von Knigge; an English *Gil Blas* was written by Ths. Holcroft; a Russian *Gil Blas* and its sequel, by Bulgarine; a French work called *The Three Gil Blas*, and its continuation *Fiorella*, by La Martelière; and another in the same language, *The Gil Blas of the Revolution*, by Picard. In 1754 was also printed at Amsterdam *The Life of Don Alphonso*.

Blas de Lirias, son of Gil Blas of Santillane, which was republished, in Paris, in 1802, under the title of *Sequel to Gil Blas, or Memoirs of Don Alphonso, &c.*

The fourth chapter of the fourth book of *Gil Blas* has, oddly enough, been put into English verse under the title of *Henry and Blanche, or the Revengeful Marriage*, London, 1745, with a motto from Virgil—

“ . . . Quis talia fando,
Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri miles Ulissei,
Temperet a lacrymis ? ”

The illustrations in these volumes have been drawn and etched specially for this edition by M. Ad. Lalauze, of Paris.

Nearly all known editions of Lesage have been consulted by me whilst engaged upon this translation ; but in any cases of doubt I always referred to the original editions of 1721 and 1735.

HENRI VAN LAUN.



LIFE OF LESAGE.

ALAIN RENÉ LESAGE was born on the 8th of May, 1668, at Sarzeau, near Vannes in Brittany. He was educated at the College of Vannes, and on his father's death, in 1682, became heir to a small fortune, which was, however, squandered by an uncle who had been chosen to act as his guardian. At the age of twenty-two he betook himself to Paris, where he entered college as a law student, and afterwards passed as an advocate, but failed to gain success at the bar. In 1694 he married Marie-Elizabeth Huyard, the daughter of a tradesman; the issue of this union, which is said to have been a happy one, being three sons and a daughter. Soon after settling in Paris, Lesage appears to have gained entrance to the best literary society, and to have acquired the friendship of the Abbé de Lyonne, to whom he was doubly indebted—firstly, for a pension of 600 livres, and, secondly, for the happy suggestion that he should devote himself to the study of the drama and prose fiction of Spain. By the advice of his friend Danchet, Lesage's first work was a translation of the letters of the Greek sophist Aristænetus, issued in 1695. In 1700 he published *Le Traître Puni*, a French version of a drama by Don Francisco de Rojas, and *Dom Felix de Mendoce*, translated from Lope de Vega; in 1702 his comedy *Le Point d'Honneur*—likewise a translation from the Spanish—was unsuccessfully produced at the Théâtre Français;

whilst the French version of the *New Adventures of Don Quixotte* from the Spanish of Avellaneda, found also no favour among the public. In 1707 he had a curious experience as a play-wright; the comedy *Don César d'Ursin*, which he had translated from Calderon, being hissed at the Français by an audience which on the same day vociferously applauded his original farce, *Crispin rival de son maître*; whereas, on the two pieces being performed before the court, the farce was condemned and the comedy graciously received. "Time," says Sir Walter Scott, "has confirmed the judgment of the Parisians, and annulled that of Versailles." *Crispin* is still sometimes acted, and the two rascally servants who, for a time, have hoodwinked the father of the heroine, and whose hand Crispin intends to obtain, under the disguise of his master, still delight the spectators. Its intrigue is bright and well kept up, though improbable, and the dialogue is witty and smart. The servant Crispin was first introduced on the French stage by the poor paralysed literary man, Paul Scarron, the first husband of Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV.

The same year, Lesage gave the world his first masterpiece, *Le Diable Boiteux*. The title and design of this work were taken from the *Diablo Cojuelo* of Luis Velez de Guevara. So much Lesage himself freely admits in the serio-sarcastic dedication to the Spanish author, prefixed to the edition of 1726. The honour of the success which the book has obtained, he observes, has been shared between himself and Guevara. At Paris, it is true, he has only received credit as a copyist, but—he adds, with a characteristic touch of causticity—on the other hand, the copy has been translated into Spanish at Madrid, and has been accepted in that

city as an original work. Besides being indebted to Guevara, Lesage, in writing *Le Diable Boiteux*, borrowed from a book by Francisca Santos, entitled *Dia y Noche de Madrid*. But the spirit which inspires his work is original. The French critic who averred that the story embodied a complete course of practical morality may have allowed his enthusiasm to obscure his judgment. But certainly the mingled wit and wisdom of the book, the happy union in its pages of grotesque fancy with stinging satire, would have long ensured its author against being included with the unread, though *Gil Blas* had never been written.

Le Diable Boiteux won immediate popularity; the eagerness with which it was sought after being attested by the story of the two young noblemen who, chancing to meet at a bookseller's where there was only a single copy of the work unsold, at once drew their swords and fought for its possession, until the one wounded the other and walked off with the coveted volume.

In 1708 the *Théâtre Français* accepted a one act comedy of Lesage, *La Tontine*, which was not played until twenty-four years later; but in 1709 his strongest drama *Turcaret* was brought out there. In this comedy, Lesage, instead of aiming, like the Spanish playwrights whom he had studied so carefully, at an ingenious entanglement of plot and counterplot to the neglect of character, follows in the footsteps of Molière. Unfortunately, the piece is too deeply marked by the bitterness of spirit to which its author seems to have yielded at the time of its composition. In *Turcaret* the indignation of the satirist has made Lesage untrue both to nature and to dramatic art, the chie character, a financier who squanders on a worthless

mistress the wealth he has amassed by dishonesty, being an almost impossible incarnation of baseness. It is said that certain financiers, having vainly offered Lesage 100,000 *livres* to suppress the piece, contrived by their influence at court to prevent the comedy from being performed at the *Français*. At the instance of the Dauphin, however, the prohibition was eventually removed, and the play seems on the whole to have been favourably received by the Parisians.

In connection with *Turcaret* a story is told, which illustrates Lesage's independence of spirit. Before the comedy had been put on the stage, its author was requested by the Duchess of Bouillon to read it to herself and a party of friends at her Hotel. On the appointed day Lesage was unavoidably detained, and the Duchess, in answer to his apologies, haughtily remarked that he had made the company lose an hour. "Madam," he replied, "if I have made the company lose an hour, I shall now allow it to gain two." And with these words he left the Hotel, which he could never again be persuaded to enter.

Between 1700 and 1736 Lesage wrote nearly a hundred dramatic pieces, of which many have never been printed, and in some of which he collaborated with Piron, Autreau, Fromaget, Fuselier, and others. These efforts were mainly of a farcical and trivial character, and have long since fallen into oblivion. Among them were *The Temple of Memory* (see the *Introductory Notice*), *Harlequin King of Serendib*, *The Girdle of Venus*, *The Pilgrims of Mecca*, *Tele-machus*, *The Regiment of Fools*, *The Two Brothers*, *The Dangerous Rivals*, *Harlequin Deucalion*, *The Princess of Carizme*, *The Quarrel of the Theatres*,

and *Harlequin Doctor in Barbary*. They were principally written for the *Foire* theatre, and were in some cases highly successful.

This theatre was composed of the pieces acted at various fairs, and above all of those played at the *Foire Saint-Laurent*, held in Paris between the *fau-bourgs* Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin, and of those brought out at the *Foire Saint-Germain*, in the *fau-bourg* of that name, on the other bank of the Seine. Both fairs lasted for about two months during the first half of the eighteenth century; the first began in August, and the second in February. Though a theatrical piece had already been performed at one of these fairs in 1678, it was not until about twenty years later that some of the farces of the Italian comedy and others were acted there by provincial actors in regular booths provided with boxes, pit, and gallery. The success of these strollers frightened the actors of *Comédie Française*, and at their request these wandering performers were forbidden to act spoken pieces at fairs. They then tried to obtain permission from the *Académie royale de Musique* to bring out some plays in which singing and dancing predominated, which were called *Opéras Comiques*, and of which Lesage may be considered the inventor. Sometimes parodies were represented of plays acted at the *Comédie Française*, or of operas performed at the *Académie royale de Musique*, whilst now and then the actors at the fairs had even to produce pieces called *par écriteaux*, in which the personages on the stage only gesticulated, and, when they had certain things to say, took out of their pockets some boards on which was printed in large type what they wished to express. But soon the actors improved on this, and couplets in rhyme were

shown, set to well-known airs which the orchestra played, and which were sung by the audience, led on by paid professionals scattered among them. The chief characters of these trifling pieces were Harlequin, Gille, Pierrot, The Doctor, Scaramouch, Columbine, and many others.

Lesage's fame rests, however, chiefly on his novel *Gil Blas*, of which the first and second volumes appeared in 1715, and established their author's claim to rank with the foremost writers of his country. The third volume of the great novel was published in 1724, and the fourth and last in 1735, when Lesage was sixty-seven years of age. For the high estimation in which it is held by eminent literary men, I beg to refer my readers to my *Introductory Notice*. The other works written by our author are a translation of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, the *Histoire d'Estévanille Gonsalez*, the least attractive of all his books; the *Bachelier de Salamanque*, which is said to have been part of the manuscript from which Lesage is falsely accused to have borrowed his *Gil Blas*; *les Aventures de Robert Chevalier dit de Beauchesne, capitaine de flibustiers*, which, like Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, is traditionally based on actual memoirs; a volume of dialogue entitled *Une Journée des Parques*; *La Valise Trouvée*, a series of satirical letters; *Les Aventures de Guzman d'Alfarache*, an example of the picaresque novel, partly original, partly translated from the Spanish of Mateo Aleman; and a collection of anecdotes,—*Melange amusant de saillies d'esprit*, &c.,—his last book, published in 1743.

There is hardly anything known of the way in which Lesage spent his time whilst engaged in gaining a livelihood with his pen, but he seems to have had

little facility in verse-making, and not to have been always witty, for Piron in his parody of the opera *Philomèle* calls him M. *Sans-Rime*, and in his *Arlequin-Pigmalion* makes *Polichinelle* ask: "Why should a fool not sometimes say some good things as now and then the wise man (Lesage) says some bad ones?" In the first-mentioned parody we also catch a glimpse of Lesage's amusements, for when *Sans-Rime* is asked whence he comes, he replies: "From the coffee-house, where for six *sols* I pass the day as usual, play chess, read the news, make fun of authors, and speak well of myself." ¹

He dwelt almost constantly in Paris, and the Rev. Joseph Spence, who visited him,² describes his house, "which is in the *faubourg* St Jacques; and so, open to the country air: the gardens laid out in the prettiest manner that ever I saw, for a town garden. It was as pretty as it was small; and when he was in the study part of it he was quite retired from the noise of the street, or any interruptions from his own family. The garden was only of the breadth of the house, from which you stept out into a raised square *parterre*, planted with a variety of the choicest flowers. From this you went down, by a flight of steps on each side, into a *berceau*, which led to two rooms or summer-houses quite at the end of the garden. These were joined by an open portico, the roof of which was supported with columns; so that he could walk from the one to the other all under cover, in the intervals of writing. The *berceaux* were covered with vines and honeysuckles, and the space between them was grove

¹ J. Desnoiresterres, *La Comédie Satirique au dix-huitième Siècle*, Paris, 1885, ch. i.

² Spence's *Anecdotes*, 1820.

work. It was in this right hand room as you go down that he wrote *Gil Blas*." Mr Spence paid Lesage a visit in summer time, but might have told another tale if he had called on him during the winter season. Our Englishman seems also to have had some conversation with the French author, for he repeats that Lesage, when "speaking of his *Gil Blas* and *Diable Boiteux*," called these books his *enfants perdus*, stated that they had "made my (his) *Hidalgo* a Lord in the English translation of *Gil Blas*, and a burgomaster in the Dutch," and that he further observed: "I verily believe that people are much alike in all countries; one cannot paint anyone without painting a thousand." Spence also notices that when "somebody had been describing the perpetual complaints of the people in England, in spite of all their privileges and enjoyments, Lesage should have said: 'Surely the people of England are the most unhappy people on the face of the earth,—with liberty, property, and three meals a day;'" and that he also heard our author say, at a time he was not rolling in riches: "I thank God, I don't wish for any one thing I could not pray for aloud!"

Lesage, who had been deaf since he was forty years old, but yet attended the rehearsals of all his pieces, had long ago found out that the life of an author was not that of a Sybarite, but had to be passed in laborious and sedentary occupations, amidst many mental anxieties, generally rewarded by a not over-abundant pay, seasoned by occasional attacks of envy and malice. As he was no flatterer of the great, did not attach himself to any party or influential nobleman, dared to have opinions of his own, and was not to be bribed, he had to work hard for his daily

bread, and gained a mere pittance. Finally he was obliged, by increasing age and infirmities, and by the grief caused by the death of his eldest son, de Montménil, an actor,¹ from whom he had long been estranged, but to whom he had become reconciled, and with whom he even seemed to have lived for some time, to go in 1743 with his wife and daughter and reside at Boulogne-sur-Mer with his second son, an *abbé*, a canon of the cathedral, and secretary to the bishop of that town, Mons. Henriau. This canon was a well-known *bon vivant*, had a good voice, and used often to sing some of the couplets which his father had written for the *Théâtre de la Foire*. The light-hearted and epicurean *abbé* Voisenon, then grand vicar of the diocese, used to meet our author, and says of him that "he was the first person he ever met who suffered from deafness and did not lose his good temper; nay, that now and then he even seemed to take a pleasure in his infirmity. He could only hear with a speaking trumpet, and called it his benefactor; for 'if I go anywhere,' Lesage is reputed to have said, 'and meet some people I don't know, I use my trumpet, but if I discover they are nincompoops, I pop it again into my pocket and defy them to annoy me.'" The Count de Tresan, a military officer of high repute,

¹ Spence says in his *Anecdotes*: "Montménil is the best actor in France, for plain, easy, genteel comedy; when he was upon the stage he did and said everything so naturally, that he seemed the very person that he represented; and one almost forgot that he was upon a stage. Although so excellent an actor, the *abbé* (Colvil) said that he did not get above a hundred *Louis d'or* a year by his profession." This same *abbé* told Spence that "Monsieur Lesage lives in a pretty genteel manner, though he has little more now to live on than what his son Montménil gets by the stage. He is the best of sons, and they live together in the greatest harmony."

and a dabbler in the fields of literature, who lived for some time at Boulogne, and used to visit our author, then about seventy-seven, says that "the old man was in a state of half torpor till mid-day, but he then revived, and was fairly in possession of his faculties till sundown." At last, however, he did not even revive at that time, and died on the 17th of November 1747, in the eightieth year of his age, leaving behind him a wife who shortly afterwards followed him, and besides his son, the clergyman, another son, who under the name of de Pittenec acted in the provinces and in Germany, as well as an only daughter, Marie-Elizabeth, who survived the whole family, and is said to have died in great distress in the hospital of Boulogne.

THE AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.

As there are some people who cannot read without seeing personal portraits in the vicious or ridiculous characters which they meet with in works of this kind, I declare to these evil-minded readers that they will err if they do so in the case of this book. I declare publicly that my purpose is only to represent human life such as it really is; God forbid that I should purpose to delineate any man in particular. Let no reader, therefore, assume to himself that to which others may lay an equal claim, lest, as Phædrus observes, he should unluckily expose his own character: Stulte nudabit animi conscientiam.

There are certain physicians in Castile as well as in France, whose practice it is to take rather too much blood from their patients. The same vices and the same eccentricities are to be seen everywhere. I confess that I have not always exactly adhered to the manners of the Spaniards; and those who are acquainted with the disorderly lives of the actresses in Madrid, may reproach me with having described their irregularities too indulgently; but I thought it necessary to soften them slightly, that they might be the more conformable to the manners of our own country.





GIL BLAS TO THE READER.

GENTLE READER, before you read the history of my life, listen to a story I am going to tell you :—

Two students went together from Pennafiel to Salamanca. Being tired and thirsty they sat down by a spring they met with on the road. While they were resting there, after having quenched their thirst, they accidentally perceived on a stone that was level with the ground, some letters already partly worn away by time, and by the feet of the flocks that came to water at the fountain. They threw some water on the stone to clean it, and then read these words in Castilian: *Aquí està encerrada el alma del licenciado Pedro Garcias*:¹ “Here lies shut up the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias.”

The younger of the two students, who was pert and thoughtless, no sooner read this inscription than he burst into a loud laugh. “Can anything be more ridiculous?” said he. “Here lies shut up the soul. . . . A soul shut up! . . . I should like to have

¹ According to Mr Everett in the *North American Review*, the word *encerrada* ought to be “*enterrada*, the inscription being a parody on the common epitaphical formula, *Here lies interred the body*, etc. The corrected reading justifies the mirth of the thoughtless student, who is represented as having been greatly diverted with the idea of *une âme enfermée*, a soul imprisoned or shut up. There is nothing in this notion particularly pleasant; but the contrast of the inscription, *Here lies interred the soul of the licentiate*, with an ordinary epitaph, might naturally be expected to excite the laughter of a shallow-pated youngster, like the one supposed.”

known the eccentric individual who was the author of such an absurd epitaph!" Having uttered these words he rose and walked away. His fellow-traveller, who had more sense, said to himself: "There must be some mystery in this affair; I shall remain here and try to discover it." He allowed his friend to depart, and then, without loss of time, began to dig round the stone with his knife. He succeeded so well that he raised it, and found underneath a leathern purse which he opened, and in which were a hundred ducats, and a card on which was the following sentence in Latin: "Whosoever thou art who hast sense enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, inherit my money, and make a better use of it than I have done." The student, delighted at his discovery, replaced the stone in its former position, and walked on to Salamanca with the soul of the licentiate.

Gentle Reader, whosoever you may be, you will certainly resemble one or other of these students. If you peruse my adventures without paying attention to the moral instructions which they contain, you will derive no advantage from this work; but if you read it carefully, you will find in it, according to the precept of Horace, profit mingled with pleasure.

TO
GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA, ESQ.,
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF GIL BLAS.

MY father, Blas of Santillana, after having borne arms for a long time in the service of the Spanish monarch, retired to his native town. There he married a second-rate citizen's daughter, who was no longer in the bloom of her youth, and I came into the world ten months after their marriage. They afterwards went to live in Oviedo, where they were obliged to go into service, my mother becoming a lady's-maid, and my father a gentleman-in-waiting.* As their only fortune was their wages, I should have run the risk of being somewhat badly brought up, if an uncle of mine, a canon, had not lived in the town. His name was Gil Perez. He was my mother's eldest brother, and my god-father. Imagine to yourself a little man, three feet and a half in height, remarkably fat, with his head sunk between his shoulders: such was my uncle. Moreover, he was an ecclesiastic who thought only how to live well, that is, how to enjoy good cheer; his prebend's stall, which was not a bad one, supplying him with the means.

* Formerly Spanish ladies of rank never left the house without being accompanied by some attendant, called *escadero*, who generally was of a certain age.

He took me into his house in my infancy, and charged himself with my education. I seemed to him so sprightly that he resolved to cultivate my mind. He bought me a primer, and undertook himself to teach me to read; which was no less useful to him than to me, for by teaching me my letters he brushed up again his reading, which he had greatly neglected; and by dint of application he came to read his breviary straight off—a thing he had never done before. He would gladly, also, have taught me the Latin tongue; it would have been so much money in his pocket, but, alas, poor Gil Perez! he had never in his life understood the rudiments of that language. He was, perhaps (for I do not advance this as a certainty), the most ignorant canon of the Chapter; and, indeed, I have heard say that he did not obtain his canonry by his erudition, but that he owed it entirely to the gratitude of a few kind-hearted nuns whose discreet messenger he had been, and who had sufficient influence to get priest's orders conferred upon him without examination.

He was obliged therefore to put me under the rod of a master: he sent me to Doctor Godinez, who passed for the cleverest pedant in Oviedo. I profited so much by the instructions I received, that after some five or six years I had gained a smattering of the Greek authors, and a fair knowledge of the Latin

poets. I also applied myself to logic, which taught me to argue freely; indeed, I grew so fond of discussion that I used to stop the passers by, whether I knew them or not, in order to engage in controversy with them. Sometimes I addressed myself to certain Hibernian strangers* who asked no better; and you should then have seen us argue! such gestures! such grimaces! such contortions! Our eyes were sparkling with fury, and our mouths foamed; we might have been taken for madmen rather than for philosophers.

At the same time, by this means, I acquired in the town a reputation for learning, to the great delight of my uncle, who conceived that I should soon cease to be an expense to him. "Now, Gil Blas," said he to me one day, "the time of your childhood is gone. You are past seventeen, and you have become quite a clever lad. We must think how we can push you on. I am inclined to send you to the University of Salamanca: with the intelligence that I can see you possess, you will not fail to obtain a good place. I shall give you a few ducats† for your journey, with my mule, which is worth ten or a dozen pistoles;‡ you can sell it in Salamanca, and use the money to keep yourself until you have obtained a situation."

* The original has *figures hibernoises*, an allusion to the strangers who came from Ireland to France with James the Second.

† A Spanish ducat was a gold coin worth about nine shillings.

‡ A pistole was a gold coin of the value of about sixteen shillings.

He could not have proposed to me anything more agreeable, for I ardently longed to see the world. Nevertheless, I had enough self-restraint to conceal my joy; and when the time had come to part, by appearing to think only of the grief of quitting an uncle to whom I was under so many obligations, I quite softened the good soul, who gave me more money than he would have done could he have seen the bottom of my heart. Before setting out I embraced my father and mother, who did not spare their advice, exhorting me to pray God for my uncle, to live honestly, not to meddle in things evil, and, above all, never to take what belonged to others. After they had lectured me for a very long while, they made me a present of their blessing—the only thing I expected from them. Presently I mounted my mule, and quitted the town.

CHAPTER II.

GIL BLAS' ALARMS ON HIS WAY TO PEGNAFLOR:
WHAT HE DID WHEN HE GOT THERE, AND WITH
WHAT KIND OF MAN HE SUPPED.

BEHOLD me then, having left Oviedo, on the road to Pegnaflor, in the open country, master

of my own actions, of a sorry mule, and of forty good ducats, not reckoning a few reals,* which I had purloined from my much esteemed uncle. The first thing I did was to let my mule go as it liked, and that was very slow. I dropped the rein on its neck, and taking my ducats from my pocket, I began to count them over and over again in my hat. I could not restrain my joy. I had never seen so much money before; and I was never weary of admiring and re-handling my coins. I was counting them for perhaps the twentieth time, when, all on a sudden, my mule, raising its head and pricking up its ears, came to a stop in the middle of the high-road. I fancied something frightened it. I looked to see what it might be, and I saw upon the ground a hat, upside down, upon which there was a large beaded rosary, while at the same time I heard a pitiable voice pronounce these words: "Honoured traveller, have pity, I beseech you, on a poor maimed soldier; cast, if you please, a few pieces of money into this hat. You will be rewarded for it in the other world." I turned my eyes at once to the side from which the voice came; and saw at the foot of a thicket, twenty or thirty paces from me, a sort of soldier, who, on two crossed sticks, supported the end of a blunder-

* A *real of plate* was a small Spanish coin, varying in value according to the time of its coinage, from 5 to 6½ pence sterling; the *real vellon* was worth about half that amount.

buss which looked to me larger than a pike, and with which he was taking aim at me. At this sight, which made me tremble for the property of the church, I stopped short. I immediately grasped my ducats tight, drew out a few reals, and approaching the hat which lay ready to receive the charity of the terrified faithful, threw them in one after the other, to show the soldier that I was dealing nobly by him. He was satisfied with my generosity, and gave me as many blessings as I gave my mule kicks in its sides, by way of instantly getting away from him. But the plaguy beast paid no heed to my impatience, its old habit of jogging on discreetly beneath my uncle having made it completely forget how to gallop.

From this occurrence I drew a by no means favourable omen for my journey. I reflected that I was not yet in Salamanca, and that I might well meet with a worse adventure. My uncle seemed to me very imprudent not to have put me in charge of a muleteer.* That was undoubtedly what he ought to have done; but he imagined that by giving me his mule my journey would cost less, and he had thought more of that than of the perils I might encounter on my way. Therefore, to remedy his error I resolved, if I had the good fortune

* At that time there were no public conveyances in Spain, and all travellers had to use mules, under the charge of muleteers.

of arriving at Pegnaflor, to sell my mule there and to go with a muleteer to Astorga, whence I would proceed in the same way to Salamanca. Though I had never been out of Oviedo I was not ignorant of the names of the towns through which I had to pass, having informed myself of them before setting out.

I arrived safely at Pegnaflor, and I stopped at the door of a tolerably decent looking inn. I had no sooner alighted than the landlord received me very civilly. He untied my trunk with his own hands, swung it across his shoulders, and ushered me into a room, whilst one of his servants led my mule to the stable. This landlord, the greatest chatterbox in the Asturias, and as ready to relate his own business without being asked, as he was curious to know that of other people, informed me that his name was Andrew Corcuelo;* that he had served a long time in the king's army as a sergeant, and that fifteen months ago he had quitted the service to marry a girl from Castropol, who, although somewhat swarthy, did not allow his custom to fall off. He told me an infinite number of other things with the hearing of which I could very well have dispensed, after which confidences, thinking himself entitled to have everything out of me, he asked me whence I came, whither I was

* *Corzuelo*, not *Corcuelo*, is the Spanish for a little fallow-deer.

going, and who I was. To which inquiries I was compelled to answer bit by bit, because he accompanied each question with a low bow, beseeching me with such a respectful air to excuse his curiosity, that I could not help satisfying it. This led me into a long conversation with him, and gave me an opportunity of mentioning my intention of parting with my mule, in order to go forward with a muleteer. He much approved of this, though not very concisely, for he descanted on all the annoying accidents which might befall me on the road, even relating several ominous stories of travellers, till I thought he would never have done. End he did, however, by saying that, if I wished to sell my mule, he knew an honest dealer who would buy it. I gave him to understand that he would oblige me by sending for his acquaintance, of whom he accordingly went in search with great eagerness.

He soon returned, accompanied by his friend, whom he introduced to me, and whose honesty he highly praised. We all three went into the yard, where my mule was brought out. They made the animal pass backwards and forwards before the dealer, who examined it from head to foot, and did not fail to say a good deal in its disparagement. I confess that there was not much good to be said of it; but if it had

been the Pope's mule,* the dealer would have found something to say against it. He declared that it had all the faults a mule could have; and the better to convince me of this he appealed to the landlord, who doubtless had his reasons for agreeing with him. "Well," said the dealer, with an air of indifference, "what do you expect to sell that ugly animal for?" After the praises he had bestowed on it, and the confirmation of Mr Corcuero, whom I thought an honest man and a good judge, they might have had my mule for nothing; so I said to the dealer that I would trust to his honesty; that he had only to value the beast conscientiously, and I would stand to his valuation. Then, with the air of an honourable man, he replied that in speaking of his conscience I was taking him at his weakest. In fact, it was not at his strongest, for instead of valuing the animal at ten or twelve pistoles, as my uncle had done, he was not ashamed to offer three ducats for it, which I received with as much pleasure as if I had got the best of the bargain.

After having so advantageously disposed of my mule, the landlord took me to a muleteer who was to leave the next day for Astorga. This muleteer told me that he should start before daybreak, and that he would be sure to

* The Pope's mule appears to have been a privileged animal. Rabelais in *Gargantua*, bk. i. ch. v., remarks, "I never drink but at my hours, like the Pope's mule."

come and rouse me. We agreed upon the price both for the hire of a mule and for my food; and when all was settled between us, I returned to the inn with Corcuelo, who told me on the way the history of this mulcteer. He repeated to me all that was said of him in the town. In short he would once more have deafened me with his troublesome gossip, if by good luck a man of a tolerably good appearance had not come to interrupt him, addressing him with much civility. I left them together, and went on my way, without the slightest suspicion that I formed the subject of their conversation.

As soon as I got to the inn, I called for my supper. It was a fast-day. They prepared a few eggs for me, and while these were being cooked I entered into conversation with the landlady, whom I had not seen before. She appeared to me rather pretty; and I found her so lively and attractive that I could have well imagined, even if her husband had not told me so, that this inn would be much frequented. When the omelette was ready, I sat down to the table by myself, but I had scarcely eaten a mouthful when the landlord entered, followed by the person who had stopped him in the street. This gentleman wore a long rapier, and seemed about thirty years old. He approached me in a most friendly manner. "Master Student," he said to me, "I have just

learned that you are Senor Gil Blas of Santilana, the ornament of Oviedo, and the torch of philosophy. Is it indeed possible that you are that profound scholar, that brilliant wit, whose reputation is so great in this neighbourhood? You do not know," he continued, addressing the landlord and landlady, "You do not know whom you have got hold of. You have a treasure in your house! You behold in this young gentleman the eighth wonder of the world!" Then turning towards me, and throwing his arms about my neck: "Excuse my transports," he added, "I cannot restrain the pleasure which your presence causes me."

I could not answer him at once, because he held me so tight that I was not able to breathe freely. As soon, however, as I got my head free from his embrace, I said to him, "I did not think my name was known at Pegnaflor." "Known?" he resumed in his former strain. "We keep a list of all the celebrated people within twenty leagues of us. You are looked upon here as a prodigy; and I do not doubt that Spain will one day be as proud of having produced you as Greece was of having given birth to her wise men." These words were followed by a fresh embrace, which I was obliged to endure, at the risk of undergoing the fate of Antæus. If I had had any experience, I should not have been the dupe of his exaggerations. I might well have known by his outrageous

flatteries that he was one of those parasites who are to be found in all towns, and who, as soon as a stranger arrives, introduce themselves to him in order to fill their stomachs at his expense. My youth and my vanity, however, made me judge of the matter quite differently. My admirer seemed to me a perfect gentleman, and I invited him to have supper with me. "Oh, most gladly," he cried; "I thank my stars too much for having brought me into the company of the illustrious Gil Blas of Santillana, not to enjoy my good fortune as long as I can. I have no great appetite," he continued; "I will sit down simply to keep you company, and I will eat a mouthful for politeness' sake."

As soon as he had said these words my panegyrist sat down opposite me. They brought him a knife and fork, and he attacked the omelette as if he had not eaten anything for three days. From the manner in which he set himself to work, I saw clearly that it would soon be finished. I ordered a second, which was made so quickly that it was served as we were finishing, or rather as he was finishing, the first. Nevertheless he went at it just as swiftly, and contrived, without missing a bite, to overwhelm me with praise, which made me thoroughly well pleased with my small self. He drank, too, very frequently. At one time it was to my health, and at another to that of my father and

mother, whose happiness in possessing such a son as myself he could not sufficiently enlarge upon. At the same time he kept filling my glass, and urged me to pledge the healths he had proposed. I did not respond badly to the toasts which he drank; and this, together with his flatteries, insensibly put me into such a good humour that, seeing our second omelette half eaten, I asked the landlord if he had no fish to give us. Master Corcuelo, who to all appearance was in league with the parasite, replied: "I have an excellent trout, but those who eat it must pay well for it; it is too great a dainty for you." "What do you call too great a dainty?" cried my flatterer in a loud voice. "You do not think what you are saying, my friend; know that you have nothing too good for Senor Gil Blas of Santillana, who deserves to be treated like a prince."

I was very glad that he had taken up the landlord's last words, and he only anticipated me; I felt offended at them, and said haughtily to Corcuelo: "Bring us your trout, and give yourself no trouble about the consequences!" The landlord, who wanted nothing better, set about preparing it, and was not long before he brought it up. At the sight of this new dish, the eyes of the parasite sparkled with joy; his complaisance was as great as ever; that is to say, he attacked the fish as he had attacked the eggs, until at last he was compelled to give

in, for fear of mischance, being by this time full to the throat. In the end, after having eaten and drunk his fill, he chose to bring the comedy to a close. "Senor Gil Blas," said he, getting up from the table, "I am too well pleased with the good cheer with which you have treated me to leave you without giving you an important piece of advice, which you seem to me to need greatly. Henceforth, be on your guard against praise. Mistrust people whom you do not know. You may meet others who, like me, would make a sport of your credulity, and perhaps push matters still further; do not be duped by them; and do not believe yourself, upon their word, the eighth wonder of the world." As he finished these words, he laughed in my face, and went away.

I felt this imposition as much as I have since felt the greatest misfortunes that have befallen me. I could not console myself for having been so grossly deceived, or rather for feeling my pride humbled. "What!" I exclaimed, "the rascal has been making sport of me! He addressed the landlord just now only to pump him, or rather they were in the plot together. Ah, simple Gil Blas, die of shame for having given such knaves a good chance to be-fool you! A pretty story they will make out of all this! It may get as far as Oviedo, and will do you much credit there! Your parents will doubtless repent of having bestowed so long a

lecture on a fool ; far from exhorting me not to deceive anyone, they ought to have advised me not to allow myself to be deceived." Troubled by these mortifying thoughts, and burning with vexation, I shut myself up in my room, and went to bed ; but I could not sleep, and I had not yet closed my eyes when the muleteer came to tell me that he was only waiting for me to be off. I got up at once, and as I was dressing Corcuelo came in with a bill, in which the trout was not forgotten. Not only was I obliged to pay what it pleased him, but I had the further vexation of perceiving, when I handed him my money, that the villain had not forgotten my adventure of the preceding night. After paying smartly for a supper which I had so ill digested, I betook myself to the muleteer with my trunk, heartily wishing that the parasite, the landlord, and the inn were one and all at the devil.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE MULETEER ON THE ROAD ;
ITS CONSEQUENCES ; AND HOW GIL BLAS FELL
INTO CHARYBDIS BY TRYING TO AVOID SCYLLA.

I WAS not the only one who travelled with the muleteer : there were two young gentlemen of Pegnaflor ; a little chorister from Mondognedo,

who was strolling about the country; and a young tradesman of Astorga, who was returning home from Verco, with his newly married wife. We very soon made each other's acquaintance; and each had presently told whence he came and whither he was going. The newly-married lady, although young, was so tawny and possessed so few attractions, that I did not much care to look at her. Nevertheless her youth and her plumpness took the fancy of the muleteer, who resolved to try and gain her favour. He spent the day thinking over this pretty plot, but he delayed the execution of it until Cacabelos, the last place where we were to sleep. He made us alight at the first inn we came to. The house was more in the country than in the town, and he knew the landlord to be a discreet and accommodating man. He took care to have us ushered into a remote apartment, where he left us to take our supper in peace; but at the end of the meal, in comes our muleteer with a furious air. "'S'death!" cried he, "I have been robbed. I had a hundred pistoles in a leather bag; and I will have them back again. I am going to the borough magistrate,* who does not understand a joke of this sort, and you will all be put to the rack, until you confess the crime and restore the money."

* In Spanish boroughs there was only an Alcade, a kind of inferior magistrate. In the large towns there were Corregidores.

Having said these words with a very natural air, he went out; and we remained behind in the greatest consternation.

It did not occur to us that this could be a trick, for we did not know each other well enough to be able to answer for each other's honesty. To say the truth, I suspected the little chorister of having done the business, and he probably suspected me. Besides, we were all greenhorns, and did not know the formalities usual in such cases. We honestly believed that to begin with we should all be put to the torture. Therefore, yielding to our terror, we left the room quickly enough. Some gained the street, others the garden—each one sought safety in flight; and the young tradesman of Astorga, as much disturbed as the rest of us at the thought of the rack, made off, like another Æneas, without troubling himself about his wife. Then the muleteer, as I afterwards learned, delighted to see his stratagem succeed according to his expectations, went to boast of his clever trick to the tradesman's wife, and to try and profit by the opportunity. But this Lucretia of the Asturias, to whom the sorry appearance of her tempter lent additional force, made a vigorous resistance, and shrieked aloud. The patrol, who happened at that moment to be passing the inn, which they knew merited a little looking after, entered and demanded the cause of these cries. The

landlord who was singing in his kitchen, and pretended he had heard nothing, was obliged to lead the officer and his men to the room of the person who was crying out. They came in the nick of time, for the Asturian lady was quite exhausted. The officer, a coarse, ill-mannered fellow, no sooner saw what was the matter than he gave the amorous muleteer five or six blows with the butt end of his halberd, addressing him in terms no less offensive to modesty than the action which called them forth. Nor was this all: he seized the offender and took him before the magistrate, with his female accuser, who, in spite of the disorder she was in, insisted on going herself to obtain justice. The judge heard what she had to say, and having attentively looked at her, decided that the accused was unworthy of pardon. He had him stripped at once, and scourged in his presence; then he ordered that on the morrow, if the husband of the Asturian lady had not returned, two of the guard, at the expense of the delinquent, should escort the complainant to the town of Astorga.

For my part, possibly more terrified than all the rest, I reached the open country; I scampered I know not through how many fields and heaths, and leaping all the ditches I found on my way, came at last hard by a forest. I was about to enter it, and to hide myself in the thickest coppice, when two men on horseback suddenly



appeared before me. They cried out, "Who goes there?" and as my surprise prevented me from answering immediately, they came up to me, and each clapping a pistol to my breast, ordered me to tell them who I was, whence I came, what business I had in that forest, and above all, to conceal nothing from them. To this style of interrogation, which seemed to me quite as efficacious as the rack with which the muleteer had threatened us, I replied that I was a young man from Oviedo, going to Salamanca: I even related to them the fright which had just been given us, and confessed that the fear of being put to torture had induced me to run away. They burst out laughing at these words, which bore witness to my simplicity; and one of them said to me: "Take courage, my friend; come with us and fear nothing; we will see you safe." With these words, he made me get up behind him, and we plunged into the forest.

I did not know what to think of this adventure, yet I anticipated no evil from it. If these people, I argued to myself, had been thieves, they would have robbed me, and perhaps murdered me. They must be honest gentlemen of this neighbourhood, who, seeing me terrified, have taken pity on me, and are carrying me away with them out of charity. I was not long left in doubt. After taking several turnings and windings in pro-

found silence, we came to the foot of a hill, where we dismounted. "This is where we live," said one of the horsemen. In vain I looked on every side; I saw neither house nor hut, nor the least appearance of a dwelling. The two men, in the meantime, raised a large wooden trap-door, covered with brushwood, which concealed the entrance to a long sloping subterranean passage, into which the horses went of their own accord, like animals accustomed to it. The horsemen made me enter with them. Then they lowered the trap-door with ropes fastened to it for the purpose—and thus was the worthy nephew of my uncle Perez caught like a rat in a trap.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBTERRANEAN DWELLING AND WHAT GIL BLAS SAW THERE.

I KNEW then with what sort of people I was, and you may judge readily enough that while this knowledge dispelled my former fear, a greater and more reasonable terror took possession of my mind. I thought I was going to lose my life and my ducats as well. I regarded myself as a victim being led to the altar, and walked, already more dead than alive, between my two conductors, who, perceiving me tremble, vainly exhorted me to

fear nothing. When we had advanced about two hundred paces, turning and descending all the way, we entered a stable lighted by two large iron lamps hanging from the roof. There was plenty of straw, and several casks full of barley. Twenty horses might easily have stood there; but there were then only the two which had just arrived. An old negro, who, nevertheless, looked strong enough, began to tie them up to the rack.

We left the stable; and, by the dismal glimmer of a few other lamps which seemed to light up these places only to reveal their horror, we came to a kitchen, in which an old woman was broiling some meat on a gridiron, and preparing supper. The kitchen was furnished with the requisite utensils, and close by might be seen a larder provided with all sorts of provisions. The cook (I must draw her portrait) was a person on the wrong side of sixty. She had had fiery red hair in her youth; for time had not so whitened her locks that they did not still retain some tinge of their primitive colour. She had an olive complexion, and her chin was pointed and prominent. Her lips were much fallen in; a large hooked nose came down over her mouth, and her eyes seemed to be of a very fine purple-red.

"Here, dame Leonarda," said one of the horsemen, presenting me to this lovely angel of darkness, "here is a young man we have

brought you." Then he turned to me, and observing that I was pale and weak, he said : "Friend, dismiss your fear; no harm is intended you. We wanted a servant to assist our cook; we came across you, and it is a lucky thing for you. You will occupy the post of a lad who was foolish enough to die a fortnight ago. He was a young man of a very delicate constitution. You seem stronger than he was: you will not die so soon. It is true you will never see the sun again; but, as a compensation, you shall have good cheer and a rousing fire. You'll pass your days with Leonarda, who is a very kind creature, and you shall have all your little comforts. I mean to let you see," he continued, "that you are not with beggars." At the same time he took a torch, and bade me follow him.

He took me into a cellar, where I saw a countless number of bottles and earthenware jars, well-stoppered, which he told me were full of excellent wine. Then he made me pass through several apartments. In some there were pieces of lincn, in others woollen and silken stuffs, and in one chamber I perceived gold and silver, not to mention much plate, with different armorial bearings. After this I followed him into a great hall which was lighted by three brass lustres, and which communicated with the other apartments. Here he put fresh questions to me. He asked me my

name, and why I had left Oviedo ; and when I had satisfied his curiosity, he said : “ Well, Gil Blas, as you left your own part of the country only to seek a good place, you must have been born with a silver spoon in your mouth * to fall into our hands. As I have already told you, you will live here in plenty, and roll in gold and silver. Besides, you will be safe. This cave is so constructed that the officers of the Holy Brotherhood † might come to this forest a hundred times without discovering it. The entrance is known only to me and my comrades. Perhaps you may ask me how we could make it without the people of the neighbourhood perceiving us ; but understand, friend, that it is not our work, and that it was made long ago. After the Moors had become masters of Grenada, Aragon, and nearly all Spain, the Christians who refused to submit to the yoke of the infidels took to flight, and concealed themselves in this country, in Biscay, and in the Asturias, whither the brave Don Pelayo ‡ had retired. Fugitives and dis-

* The original has *il faut que tu sois né coiffé*, “ you must have been born with a caul.”

† The *Santa Hermandad* is a kind of brotherhood, the members of which are bound to track out all criminals who have escaped from justice, and deliver them into its hands. The Holy Hermandad must not be confounded with the Holy Office, that being the Inquisition.

‡ After the defeat of the Christians by the Moors at Guadalese in 711, Pelayo, son of a duke of Cantabria, gathered under his command numbers of those who had fled to the mountains of the

persed in small bands, they lived on the mountains and in the woods. Some dwelt in caves, and others made subterranean dwellings, of which this is one. Having afterwards succeeded in driving their enemies from Spain, they returned to the towns. From that time forth their hiding places have served to shelter people of our profession. It is true the Holy Brotherhood have discovered and destroyed some of these retreats, but there are still others remaining; and, thank Heaven, I have lived here in safety for nearly fifteen years. My name is Captain Rolando; I am head of the band, and the man you saw with me is one of my comrades."

CHAPTER V.

OF THE ARRIVAL OF SEVERAL OTHER ROBBERS IN
THE CAVE, AND OF THE PLEASANT CONVERSA-
TION WHICH THEY ALL HAD TOGETHER.

As Captain Rolando ended his story, six new comers appeared in the hall—the lieutenant and five of the band, who returned laden with booty. They brought two hampers filled with sugar, cinnamon, pepper, figs, almonds, and

Asturias, and, after defeating the Moslems in several battles, laid the foundations of a Gothic kingdom, of which Leon was the capital. He died in 737.

raisins. The lieutenant told the captain that he had just taken these hampers from a grocer of Benavento, whose mule he had likewise seized. As soon as he had given an account of his expedition, the plunder of the grocer was taken to the store. Then there was no talk save of enjoyment. A large table was set up in the hall, and I was sent back to the kitchen, where dame Leonarda told me what I had to do. I yielded to necessity, since my evil fate would have it so; and, concealing my grief, I prepared to wait upon these worthy gentlemen.

I began with the sideboard, which I decked with silver cups, and several earthenware jars filled with the good wine which Rolando had extolled to me. Next I brought in two ragouts, which were no sooner served than all the company sat down. They began to eat with a good appetite, and I, standing behind them, was ready to pour out their wine. I acquitted myself so well, though I had never waited before, that I was fortunate enough to receive their compliments. The captain in a few words related my history, which vastly amused them. Then he spoke of me in a highly complimentary manner; but by this time I had had enough of flattery, and I could listen to it without danger. Thereupon they all praised me, declaring that I seemed born to be their cup-bearer, and was worth a

hundred of my predecessor. And as, since his death, dame Leonarda had had the honour of offering these infernal gods their nectar, they degraded her, and installed me in that glorious office. Thus a new Ganymede, I succeeded that venerable Hebe.

A large joint of roast-meat, served up shortly after the ragouts, satisfied the hunger of the robbers, who, drinking as steadily as they ate, were soon in boisterous good humour. They all began talking at once: one began a story, another cracked a joke, a third shouted, a fourth sang; while no one listened to his neighbour. At last Rolando, wearied of a scene to which he vainly contributed a good deal on his own behalf, broke in with so loud a voice that he silenced the company. "Gentlemen," he said in the tone of a master, "listen to what I have to propose to you. Instead of deafening each other by talking all together, would it not be better to entertain ourselves like rational beings? A thought just strikes me: since we have been together we never had the curiosity to ask from what families we spring, and by what chain of events we came to adopt our profession. This seems to me, however, worth knowing. Let us then exchange confidences, and amuse ourselves." The lieutenant and the rest, as if they had something very entertaining to relate, seemed very delighted, agreed

to the captain's proposal, and the latter began as follows:—

“Gentlemen, you must know that I am the only son of a rich citizen of Madrid. The day of my birth was celebrated in my family by endless rejoicings. My father, who was already of a certain age, was extremely delighted to have an heir, and my mother undertook to suckle me herself. My maternal grandfather, who was still alive at that time, was a harmless old man, only thinking of telling his beads and relating his warlike exploits; for he had borne arms a long time, and often boasted of having stood fire. I gradually became the idol of these three persons, and was forever in their arms. That study might not hurt my health in my early years, they suffered me to pass my days in the most childish amusements. ‘Children,’ said my father, ‘must not seriously apply themselves until time has somewhat matured their understanding.’ Awaiting this maturity, I learned neither to read nor to write; but for all that I did not waste my time. My father taught me a thousand games. I knew cards thoroughly, I could handle the dice, and my grandfather told me extraordinary stories about the military expeditions in which he had been concerned. Every day he sang me the same songs, and when, after having repeated ten or a dozen lines for three months, I succeeded in saying them without a mistake, my parents marvelled

at my memory. They seemed to be no less pleased with my intelligence when, taking advantage of the liberty I had of saying whatever I chose, I interrupted their conversation by talking at random. 'Ah, what a pretty little dear!' my father would cry, looking at me with inexpressible delight, while my mother would instantly overwhelm me with caresses, and my grandfather weep for joy. I also played the most unbecoming tricks before them with impunity. They overlooked everything; they adored me. In the meantime, I was entering on my twelfth year, and I had not yet had a master. They provided me with one; but at the same time he had precise orders to teach me without employing any corporal punishment; they only permitted him to threaten me occasionally, in order to inspire me with a little fear. This permission did me but little good, for I either laughed at my master's threats, or else, with tears in my eyes, went and complained to my mother or to my grandfather, and made them believe that he had treated me very badly. The poor devil vainly denied the accusation; he was set down as a tyrant, and I was always believed before he was. One day I happened to scratch myself, and began to cry as though I had been flayed; my mother ran up, and packed off the master there and then, though he protested, and called Heaven to witness that he had not even touched me.

“In this way I got rid of all my teachers, until one came to my mind. He was a bachelor of Alcala. Oh, he was an excellent master for a youth of good family! He was fond of women, gambling, and wine; I could not be in better hands. He set himself first to gain my affection by kindness; he succeeded, and thus made himself liked by my parents, who resigned me to his care. They had no cause to repent of it. He soon made me perfect in the knowledge of the world, and, by taking me with him to all the places he liked, he inspired me with such a taste for them, that I became proficient in everything except in Latin. As soon as he saw that I had no longer need of his instructions, he went and offered them elsewhere.

“If during my childhood I had lived at home just as I liked, it was much worse when I became master of my actions. It was in my family that I first displayed my impertinence. I continually ridiculed my father and mother, who only laughed at my sallies, and the more flippant I became, the better were my parents pleased with me. Meantime I got into all sorts of scrapes with young men of my own disposition; and as our parents did not give us enough money to continue such a pleasant life, each one stole what he could lay his hands on at home, and that being still insufficient, we began to rob at night, which was

no small advance. Unfortunately the *Corregidor** heard of our doings. He was going to have us arrested, but we were warned of his villainous designs. We took to flight, and began to operate on the highway. From that time forth, gentlemen, I have followed this calling in which it has pleased Heaven I should grow old, in spite of the dangers to which it is exposed."

The captain ended here, and the lieutenant, of course, spoke after him. "Gentlemen," he said, "an education quite different from that of Senor Rolando, has, in my case, led to the same result. My father was a butcher of Toledo; he justly passed for the roughest man in his district, and my mother had a temper not a whit more gentle. They whipped me in my infancy as though they were vying with each other; every day I had a thousand lashes from them. The slightest fault was followed by the severest punishments. It was in vain I begged for mercy with tears in my eyes, and protested that I was sorry for what I had done; they forgave nothing; and generally they beat me without a cause. When my father flogged me, my mother, as though he had not exerted himself sufficiently, came to his assistance, instead of interceding for me. This treatment inspired

* *Corregidor*, literally a corrector, was the chief magistrate in a large Spanish city. See page 18.

me with such a distaste for my home that I quitted it before I had reached my fourteenth year. I took the road to Aragon, and begged my way to Saragossa. I ingratiated myself with some vagrants, who led a tolerably pleasant life. They taught me to counterfeit blindness, to appear maimed, to put artificial ulcers on my legs, and the like. In the morning, like actors preparing to play a comedy, we arranged the characters we should assume. Each hastened to his post; and in the evening we came together again, and enjoyed ourselves all night at the expense of those who had taken pity on us during the day. Nevertheless, I grew tired of these wretches, and wishing to move with more gentleman-like people, I entered into partnership with some sharpers. They taught me several clever tricks; but we soon had to leave Saragossa, through a disagreement with a magistrate who had hitherto protected us.* Every one followed his own devices. For my part, being minded to take a bold course, I joined a company of brave fellows who levied blackmail on travellers; and I liked their mode of life so well that I have never wished to seek another from that time forward. Thus, gentlemen, I am deeply

* The Countess d'Aulnoy's *Relation du Voyage en Espagne* says, "The judges have not enough salary to live upon, which is the cause that lawsuits are dragged on for a very long time, and that bribery and corruption are much greater in Spain than in France."

indebted to my parents for having treated me so badly; for if they had brought me up a little more gently, I should doubtless at this moment have been a miserable butcher instead of having the honour to be your lieutenant."

"Gentlemen," said next a young robber, who was seated between the captain and the lieutenant, "to speak without boasting, the stories which we have heard are neither so complicated nor so curious as mine; I am sure you will agree with me. I owe my existence to a countrywoman who lived in the environs of Seville. Three weeks after she had brought me into the world, my mother, who was young, comely, and had plenty of milk, received the offer of a nurse-child. It was the child of a man of noble rank, an only son, just born in Seville. My mother gladly accepted the proposal, and went to fetch the child. It was entrusted to her care; and she had no sooner brought it to the village, when, fancying some resemblance between it and myself, she conceived the idea of making me pass for the nobleman's child, in the hope that I might one day be grateful for that good turn. My father, who was no more scrupulous than peasants are in general, approved of the deceit; so, after our swaddling-clothes had been exchanged, the son of Don Rodrigo de Herrera was sent under my name to another nurse, and my mother suckled me under his.

“In spite of all that can be said for instinct and the power of blood, the parents of the little nobleman were easily taken in by the change. They had not the least suspicion of the trick that had been played them, and up to the age of seven I was continually in their arms. As it was their intention to make me a perfect gentleman, they gave me all kinds of masters; but the cleverest sometimes have pupils who do them little honour: I had little inclination for the lessons I had to learn, and still less taste for the sciences they wished to teach me. I greatly preferred to gamble with the servants, with whom I used to consort at all hours in the kitchens or in the stables. Gambling, however, was not long my ruling passion. I was not seventeen when I got drunk every day. I set my cap, also, at all the women in the house, attaching myself especially to a kitchen-maid, who seemed to me to be worth my best attention. She was a fat, chubby wench, whose liveliness and plumpness pleased me greatly. I made love to her with so little caution, that Don Rodrigo himself took notice of it. He sharply took me to task, reproached me with the baseness of my inclinations, and for fear the sight of the beloved object might render his remonstrances useless, he turned my princess out of doors.

“This step displeased me, and I determined to be avenged. I stole the jewels of Don Rodrigo’s

wife, and the plunder was pretty considerable. Then, going off to my Helen, who had taken refuge with a laundress of her acquaintance, I carried her off openly, so that no one might fail to know it. I went still further: I took her to her own country, and married her formally, as much to spite the Herreras as to set so fine an example to youths of good family. Three months after this grand marriage, I learned that Don Rodrigo was dead. This intelligence was not lost upon me: I betook myself instantly to Seville, to claim his property; but I found a change of circumstances. My mother was no more, and she had been indiscreet enough to confess all on her death-bed, in the presence of the vicar of the village and other trustworthy witnesses. The son of Don Rodrigo was already occupying my place, or rather his own, and he had just been recognised, with all the more pleasure, because they were dissatisfied with me; so that, having nothing to expect from that quarter, and having lost my taste for my stout wife, I joined some gentlemen of the road, with whom I began my expeditions."

The young robber having ended his story, another related that he was the son of a shopkeeper of Burgos; that in his youth, urged by an inconsiderate devotion, he had turned monk, joined a very austere order, and had apostatised a few years later. In short, the eight robbers spoke each in their turn; and when I had

heard them all, I was not surprised to see them in each other's company. Then they changed their conversation. They brought forward various plans for the approaching campaign; and after having settled their plan of operations, they rose from the table and went to bed. They lighted their candles, and retired to their rooms. I followed Captain Rolando into his, where, as I was helping him to undress, he said to me gaily: "Well, Gil Blas, you see how we are living. We are always enjoying ourselves; neither hate nor envy intrudes amongst us; we never have the slightest disagreement; we are more united than monks. You will lead a very agreeable life here, my lad, for I do not think you are fool enough to grieve about living with robbers. Why! Is there any other species of men in the world? No, my friend, all men like to take what belongs to others; it is a general sentiment; the only difference lies in the manner of practising it. Conquerors, for instance, take the territories of their neighbours. People of quality borrow and never repay. Bankers, treasurers, stockbrokers, clerks, and tradesmen of all kinds, great and small, are not over scrupulous. As for men of law, I need not speak of them; everyone knows what they can do. Yet we must confess that they are more humane than we; for we often deprive innocent people of their lives, and they sometimes save the lives of the guilty."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTEMPT WHICH GIL BLAS MADE TO ESCAPE,
AND ITS RESULT.

AFTER the robber-captain had made this apology for his profession, he went to bed, and I returned to the hall, where I cleared the table, and put everything in order. Then I went into the kitchen, where Domingo (such was the name of the old negro) and dame Leonarda were at supper, and waiting for me. Though I had no appetite, I sat down with them. I could not eat, and as I seemed as downcast as I had cause to be, this well-matched pair set to work to console me; which they did in a way more calculated to drive me to despair than to assuage my grief. "Why do you take on so, child?" said the old woman, "you ought rather to rejoice at being here. You are young, and you seem simple; you would soon have been ruined in the world. You would certainly have met with libertines who would have drawn you into all kinds of excesses, whilst here your innocence is in a safe haven." "Dame Leonarda is right," said the old negro, gravely, "and consider, moreover, that there are nothing but troubles in the world. Thank Heaven, my friend, for having delivered you all

at once from the perils, the difficulties, and the miseries of life."

I bore this talk quietly, because it would have availed me nothing to get angry. Indeed, I am sure that if I had put myself in a rage I should have made them laugh at my expense. At length, Domingo, after having eaten and drunk freely, retired to the stable. Leonarda presently took a lamp, and led me to a vault which served as a cemetery for the robbers who died a natural death, and in which I saw a pallet looking more like a grave than a bed. "Here is your room, my chick," said she, gently stroking my chin with her hand; "the lad whose place you have the happiness of occupying slept there as long as he was amongst us, and there he lies now he is dead. He went off in the flower of his age; do not be so silly as to follow his example." Whilst saying these words, she gave me the lamp and returned to her kitchen. I set the lamp on the ground and threw myself on the pallet, not so much to rest as to give myself up to reflection. "O Heaven!" I exclaimed, "was there ever fate so frightful as mine? I am to bid farewell to the light of day; and as if it were not enough to be buried alive at the age of eighteen, I must also serve robbers, spend my days with highwaymen and my nights with the dead!" These thoughts, which seemed to me very dismal, as in fact they were, caused me to

weep bitterly. I cursed a hundred times my uncle's plan of sending me to Salamanca, I repented of having been in terror of the law at Cacabelos, I wished I had submitted to torture; but, considering that I was exhausting myself with complaints to no purpose, I began to think of some means by which I could escape, and I said to myself: "Is it really impossible to get out of this? The robbers are slumbering, the cook and the negro will soon be the same: whilst they are all snoring can I not, with this lamp, discover the passage through which I came down into this infernal abode? True, I do not think I am strong enough to lift the trap-door at the entrance. However, I'll try; I will have nothing to reproach myself with. My despair will lend me strength, and who knows but I may succeed?"

Thus I formed this great resolution. I got up as soon as I judged that Leonarda and Domingo were at rest. I took the lamp and stole out of the vault, recommending myself to all the saints in Heaven. It was not without difficulty that I threaded my way through the windings of this new labyrinth. Nevertheless, I got to the door of the stable, and at length perceived the passage I was looking for. I walked on, I advanced towards the trap-door, with mingled joy and fear; but, alas! half-way up the passage I came across a cursed iron grating,

close shut, with bars so close together that I could hardly get my hand through. I was quite confounded at the sight of this fresh obstacle, which I had not perceived on entering, because the grating was then open. Still I did not fail to feel the bars. Then I took a peep at the lock, and even tried to force it; when all on a sudden I felt across my shoulders five or six blows from a heavy lash, vigorously laid on. I cried out so lustily that the cavern rang with the sound; and looking immediately behind me, I saw the old negro in his shirt, holding a dark lantern in one hand, and the instrument of my punishment in the other. "Ah, ah!" said he, "you little rascal; you want to escape! Oh, do not think you can catch me napping; I heard you well enough. You thought you would find the grating open, did you not? Take it for granted, my friend, that you will henceforth always find it shut. When we keep any one here in spite of himself, he must be much cleverer than you are to escape us."

Meanwhile, two or three robbers woke with a start at the howl I had set up, and not knowing but that the Holy Brotherhood might be falling upon them, they arose and called loudly on their comrades. In an instant all were on their feet. They seized their swords and carbines, and rushed almost without any clothes on to the spot where I and Domingo

were. But as soon as they learned the cause of the noise they had heard, their anxiety changed into bursts of laughter. "How now, Gil Blas," said the apostate monk, "you have been with us only six hours, and you wish to take leave of us already? You must have a great aversion to retirement. Ah, what would you do if you were a Carthusian friar? Go to bed. You shall get off this time with the stripes that Domingo has given you; but if you ever try to escape again, by Saint Bartholomew, we will flay you alive." With these words he departed; and the other robbers also went to their rooms, laughing heartily at the attempt I had made to give them the slip. The old negro, well pleased with his adventure, returned to his stable; and I went back to my cemetery, where I spent the remainder of the night weeping and wailing.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT GIL BLAS DID WHEN HE COULD DO
NOTHING BETTER.

For the first few days I thought I should succumb to the grief which consumed me, I simply dragged on a lingering existence; but at last my good genius inspired me with the idea

of dissimulating. I pretended to be less sad ; I began to laugh and sing, though I had no mind to it ; in a word, I concealed my feelings so well that Leonarda and Domingo were deceived. They thought the bird had become accustomed to its cage. The robbers imagined the same thing. I assumed a lively manner in pouring out their drink, and joined in their conversation when I had an opportunity of slipping in a joke. My freedom, far from displeasing, amused them. " Friend Gil Blas," said the captain to me one night when I was playing the jester, " you are right in banishing melancholy ; I am delighted with your disposition and intelligence. One does not know men all at once ; I had no idea you were so witty and so cheerful."

The others also praised me highly, and exhorted me to persist in the generous feeling I displayed towards them. In short, they seemed so well pleased with me that, profiting by so good an opportunity, I said, " Gentlemen, permit me to tell you the innermost feelings of my mind. Since I have been living here I feel myself a different man from what I was before. You have cured me of the prejudices of my education ; I have gradually acquired your ideas ; I have a taste for your profession ; and have a very great desire of being honoured by becoming one of your companions, and of sharing with you the perils of your expeditions." The whole

company applauded this speech. They praised my good intentions; then it was unanimously resolved that I should have to wait on them for some time longer, to see if I persisted in my vocation; that afterwards they would carry me with them in their excursions;* that finally they would give me the honourable position I asked, which, they said, they could not refuse to a young fellow who seemed so well minded as myself.

I was therefore obliged to continue my dissimulation, and to pursue my occupation of cup-bearer. I was greatly mortified, for I aspired to become a robber only to have the freedom of going out like the rest of them, in the hope that during an expedition I should some day have a chance of escaping. This hope alone kept me alive. The delay, however, appeared to me long, and I tried more than once to elude the vigilance of Domingo; but there was no chance: he was too much on his guard: I would have defied a hundred men like Orpheus to charm this Cerberus. It is true, moreover, that, from fear of exciting suspicion, I did not do all that I might have done to deceive him. He watched me, and I was obliged to act with much circumspection to avoid betraying myself. I looked forward,

* The original has *on me ferait faire mes caravanes*, they would let me make my caravans. *Caravanes* was the name given to the maritime expeditions which the Knights of Malta had to undertake before becoming dignitaries of their order.

therefore, to the day the robbers had fixed for receiving me into their band, with as much impatience as if I had been about to enter a company of farmers of the revenue.*

Heaven be praised ! six months later the time came. One night Captain Rolando said to his men : “ Gentlemen, we must keep our word with Gil Blas. I have no bad opinion of that young fellow ; he seems to me made to walk in our steps ; I think we shall make something of him. I am of opinion that to-morrow we ought to take him with us to gather laurels on the high-road. Let us make it our business to train him to glory.” The robbers were all of the same mind with their captain ; and, in order to let me see that they already regarded me as one of them, from that moment they dispensed with my attendance on them. They reinstated dame Leonarda in the office which they had transferred from her to me. They made me change my dress, which consisted simply of a short, thread-bare cassock, and dressed me up in the spoils of a gentleman recently robbed. After that I made ready for my first campaign.

* In French *traitants*, a name given, up to the end of the eighteenth century, to all persons connected with the collecting of the taxes or with the lending of money to the State. They were called *traitants* because they had made a treaty, *traité*, with the Government regarding the conditions upon which they were to collect the taxes.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIL BLAS ACCOMPANIES THE ROBBERS ; HIS
EXPLOIT ON THE HIGH-ROAD.

It was towards the close of a September night that I quitted the underground cavern with the robbers. Like them, I was armed with a carbine, a pair of pistols, a sword, and a bayonet, and I was mounted on a pretty good horse, which had been taken from the same gentleman whose clothes I wore. I had been living in the dark so long that day-break dazzled me ; but little by little my eyes became accustomed to the light.

We passed by Pontferrada, and placed ourselves in ambush in a small wood skirting the high-road to Leon, where, without being seen, we could see all who passed by. There we were waiting until fortune should give us a good chance, when we perceived a Dominican friar, mounted, contrary to the custom of these good fathers, on a sorry mule. "Heaven be praised !" cried the captain, laughing ; "here is a capital beginning for Gil Blas. He must go and bid this monk stand and deliver ; let us see how he will set about it." All the robbers decided this was the very thing that would suit me, and they exhorted me to acquit

myself handsomely. "Gentlemen," said I, "you shall be satisfied. I will go and strip that priest as bare as my hand, and bring you his mule." "Nay, nay," said Rolando; "the beast is not worth the trouble: only bring us his reverence's purse; that is all we ask of you." "I go then," I replied, "under the eyes of my masters, to make my first attempt; I hope they will honour me with their commendations." Thereupon I sallied from the wood, and advanced towards the monk, praying Heaven to pardon the action I was about to perform; for I had not been long enough with these highwaymen to behave thus without reluctance. I would gladly have made my escape at that moment; but most of the robbers were better mounted than I. If they had seen me take to flight they would have been at my heels, and would soon have caught me again; or perhaps they would have discharged their carbines at me, and I should have fared ill. I therefore dared not attempt such a ticklish business. I came up with the priest, and demanded his purse, pointing my pistol at him. He stopped short to look at me, and without seeming much afraid. "My child," said he, "you are very young; you are taking early to a villainous trade." "Father," I replied, "villainous as it is, I wish I had begun it sooner." "What! my son," replied the good monk, who did not understand the real meaning of my words,

"what are you saying? What blindness! Give me leave to place before your eyes the unhappy condition" "Come, come father!" I hastily interrupted him, "a truce to your morality, I beseech you: I do not take to the high-road to listen to sermons. These are now out of the question; you must give me hard cash. I want money." "Money!" said he, with an air of astonishment; "you judge amiss of the charity of Spaniards if you think people of my stamp need money to travel in Spain. Let me undeceive you. We receive a hearty welcome wherever we go; and we are lodged and boarded by people who only require our prayers in return. In short, we carry no money about us on the road. We trust to Providence." "No, no," I rejoined, "you do not trust to that; you always have some pistoles about you to make more sure of Providence. Come, father," added I, "let us make an end of this; my comrades, who are in yonder wood, are getting impatient. Throw your purse on the ground without more ado, or I shall certainly kill you."

At these words, which I uttered with a menacing look, the monk seemed to be afraid for his life. "Wait," said he, "I will satisfy you then, since I must. I can easily see that with men like you, figures of speech are of no avail." As he said this he drew from under his gown a large purse of chamois leather, and

threw it on the ground. Then I told him he might continue his journey, and he did not give me the trouble of repeating it. He stuck his heels into his mule, which, belying the opinion I had of it, for I thought it no better than my uncle's, all of a sudden set off at a pretty good pace. As soon as the monk was at a distance I dismounted. I picked up the purse, which seemed to me a heavy one. I mounted again and quickly regained the wood, where the robbers were eagerly waiting to congratulate me, just as though the victory I had gained had cost me dear. They hardly gave me time to get off my horse, so anxious were they to embrace me. "Courage, Gil Blas," said Rolando, "you have done wonders! I have kept my eyes on you during your performance, and observed your countenance; I predict that in time you will become an excellent highwayman, or I do not know anything about it." The lieutenant and the rest applauded this prophecy, and assured me that I should not fail to fulfil it. I thanked them for the high opinion they had formed of me, and promised to do my very best to retain it.

After they had praised me more than I deserved, they took it into their heads to examine the booty I had brought in. "Let us see," they said, "how this monk's purse is lined." "It ought to be well filled," said one, "for these good fathers do not move about

like pilgrims." The captain untied the purse, opened it, and drew out two or three handfuls of little copper medals, with an *Agnus Dei* or two, and a few scapularies.* At the sight of such a novel prize all the robbers burst out laughing. "Upon my soul," cried the lieutenant, "we are much obliged to Gil Blas : he has broken ground with a theft very seasonable to our company." This joke led to others. These miscreants, and especially the apostate monk, began to make very merry over the business.

They uttered a thousand sallies which I cannot repeat, and which plainly denoted the profligacy of their morals. I was the only one who did not laugh. It is true I did not feel inclined to laugh because they amused themselves at my expense. Everyone cracked his joke, and the captain said : "Upon my word Gil Blas, I advise you, as a friend, to have nothing more to say to monks, for they are too clever and knowing for you."

* An *Agnus Dei* is a cake of wax or dough, on which is stamped a lamb supporting the banner of the cross, and which is supposed to be a talisman against accidents or temptations. A scapulary is a part of the habit of certain religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church, consisting of two bands of woollen stuff worn over the gown, of which the one crosses the back or shoulders, and the other the stomach. Sometimes a piece of these bands was even called a scapulary.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SERIOUS INCIDENT WHICH FOLLOWED THIS
ADVENTURE.

WE remained in the wood for the greater part of the day without perceiving any traveller who might make amends for the monk. At last we were coming out in order to return to our cavern, thinking that this ludicrous event, which still formed the subject of our conversation, was to be the end of our exploits, when we perceived afar off a carriage drawn by four mules. It came up to us at full trot, and was attended by three men on horseback, who seemed to be well armed and prepared to encounter us, if we were bold enough to assail them. Rolando made the troop halt, and hold a counsel; and the result was that we were to attack. He at once drew us up as he thought fit, and we advanced towards the carriage in order of battle. In spite of the applause I had received in the wood, I trembled violently, and presently a cold sweat broke out all over my body, which augured no good. To add to my happiness I was in the van of the line, between the captain and the lieutenant, who had placed me there to accustom me to stand fire, without loss of time. Rolando, observing how much nature suffered within me, cast a

side look upon me, and said in a resolute voice: "Hark ye! Gil Blas, mind you do your duty; I warn you that if you turn tail, I shall blow your brains out." I was too much convinced that he would do as he said, to neglect the warning; so I thought only of commending my soul to God, since I had no less to fear from one side than from the other.

Meanwhile the carriage and the horsemen drew near. They suspected what sort of men we were; and guessing our intention from our appearance, stopped within musket-shot. They had carbines and pistols as well as ourselves, and whilst they prepared to face us, there came out of the carriage a gentleman of handsome appearance, richly dressed. He got upon a spare horse, which one of the attendants held by the bridle, and put himself at the head of his party, though he had only a sword and a pair of pistols. They were four against nine, for the coachman remained on his seat, yet they advanced towards us with a boldness which redoubled my terror. Nevertheless I did not fail, though I trembled in every limb, to hold myself in readiness to shoot; but, to tell the truth, I shut my eyes, and turned my head aside as I pulled the trigger; so that, from the way I did fire, I do not think I need have that shot upon my conscience.

I will not give the details of this action, for though I was present I saw nothing of it; and

my fear, whilst it disturbed my imagination, concealed from me the horror of the very sight which terrified me. All I know is, that after a great noise of firing, I heard my comrades shout "Victory! victory!" At this exclamation, the terror which had seized upon me passed away, and I beheld the four horsemen stretched lifeless on the field of battle. On our side we had but one man killed; it was the apostate monk, who on this occasion had only what he deserved for his apostasy, and for his vile jests about the scapularies. One of our men had a ball in the right knee-cap, whilst the lieutenant was also wounded, but very slightly, the bullet having only grazed his skin.

Senor Rolando ran at once to the door of the carriage. Within there was a lady from four to five-and-twenty, who struck him as very lovely, in spite of her sad condition. She had swooned during the conflict, and had not yet recovered. Whilst he was looking at her, the rest of us took care of the plunder. We began by securing the dead men's horses, for these animals, terrified by the noise of the firing, had got some distance away after having lost their masters. As for the mules they had not stirred, though during the conflict the coachman had jumped off his seat and escaped. We dismounted to unharness them, and loaded them with several trunks which we found strapped before and

behind the carriage. This done, by the captain's orders we took the lady, who had not yet recovered her senses, and placed her on horseback before one of the strongest and best mounted of the company; then, leaving the carriage and the dead men, whom we had stripped, on the highway, we carried off the lady, the mules, and the horses.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE ROBBERS BEHAVED TO THE LADY. THE
GRAND DESIGN WHICH GIL BLAS CONCEIVED,
AND ITS RESULT.

ABOVE one hour after dark we reached the cavern. We first led the horses to the stable, where we were obliged to tie them up to the manger ourselves, and to attend to them, because the old negro had been in bed for three days with a violent attack of gout, whilst rheumatism had settled in all his limbs. He had only his tongue at liberty, and he expressed his impatience by horrible blasphemies. We left the wretch to swear and blaspheme, and went into the kitchen, where our attention was engrossed by the lady, who seemed to be sinking into the arms of death. We spared no means of restoring her to con-

sciousness, and at last we had the happiness of succeeding. But when she had regained her senses, and saw that she was in the hands of a number of strange men, she realised the extent of her misfortune and trembled. All the horror, grief and despair combined can express was depicted in her eyes, which she raised to Heaven as though to complain of the indignities which menaced her, and then, suddenly giving way before these terrible apprehensions, she fainted again, her eyes closed, and the robbers thought that death was about to snatch their prey from them. Thereupon the captain, thinking it better to leave her to herself than to torment her with any more of their assistance, had her carried to Leonarda's bed, where she was left alone to let nature take her course.

We went into the hall, where one of the robbers who had been a surgeon attended to the wounds of the lieutenant and of the other brigand, and rubbed them with some ointment. After this, we were anxious to see what the trunks contained. Some were full of lace and linen, others of clothes, but the last we opened contained several bags of pistoles, which greatly rejoiced the gentlemen concerned. After this examination the cook set out the sideboard, laid the cloth, and served up supper. We conversed at first about the great victory we had gained. Whereupon Rolando, addressing me, said : " Confess, Gil Blas, confess, my lad, that

you were terribly afraid." I candidly admitted the fact, but promised to fight like a paladin after having been through two or three campaigns. Thereupon all the company took my part, saying that excuses ought to be made for me, for the action had been very hot, and that I had not behaved badly for a young fellow who had never been accustomed to the smell of gunpowder.

The conversation then turned upon the mules and horses which we had just brought to the cavern. It was decided that on the morrow, before day-break, we should all go and sell them at Mansilla, where probably a report of our expedition would not yet have arrived. This resolution being taken we finished our supper, and then returned to the kitchen to see the lady, whom we still found in the same condition. We thought that she would not live through the night. Nevertheless, though there seemed hardly any signs of life in her, some of the robbers did not fail to cast an evil eye upon her, and to betray their lustful desires, which they would have satisfied, had not Rolando prevented it by telling them they at least should wait until the lady had recovered from the overwhelming grief which deprived her of every feeling. Their respect for the captain restrained them; nothing else could have saved the lady; death itself would probably not have protected her honour.

Once more we left the unfortunate lady in the same condition in which we found her. Rolando simply commanded Leonarda to look after her, and each retired to his own room. For my part, when I was in bed, instead of going to sleep I thought only of the lady's misfortune. I made no doubt she was a lady of rank, and considered her fate all the more deplorable. I could not picture without shuddering the horrors which awaited her, and I was as much moved by this as if united to her by the ties of blood or friendship. At last, after having sufficiently bewailed her destiny, I began to consider some means of preserving her honour from the danger by which it was threatened, and, at the same time, of getting myself out of the cavern. I recollected that the old negro could not move, and that, since his illness, the cook had the key of the grating. This thought stimulated my imagination, and made me conceive a plan over which I pondered well. Next I began to put it into practice in the following manner.

I pretended to have pains in the stomach, and began to complain and to groan; and then, raising my voice, I uttered loud cries. The robbers awoke, were soon by my side, and asked me what made me cry out so. I replied that I had horrible pains in the stomach, and the better to persuade them of the fact I began to grind my teeth, to make all manner of fright-

ful grimaces and contortions, and to throw myself about in a strange fashion. Then I suddenly grew quiet, as though my pains had given me a respite; a moment afterwards I again jumped about on my pallet and threw about my arms. In a word, I played my part so well that the robbers, cunning as they were, allowed themselves to be deceived, and really thought that I was suffering violent pangs. But I acted so well that they annoyed me in a provoking way; for as soon as my charitable comrades believed that I was suffering, they one and all set to work to give me ease. One brought me a bottle of brandy and made me swallow half of it; another, in spite of myself, gave me an injection of oil of sweet almonds; another went and warmed a napkin, and clapped it burning hot upon my stomach. 'Twas in vain I cried for mercy, they set down my cries to the pains in the stomach, and continued to make me suffer veritable torments, by wishing to rid me of those I had not. At last, unable to resist any longer, I was obliged to tell them that I felt no more pain, and begged them to spare me. They ceased to torment me with their remedies, and I took care not to complain any more, for fear of again experiencing their aid.

This scene lasted nearly three hours; after which the robbers, considering that daylight was not far off, prepared to depart for Mansilla. I then played a new trick; I wanted

to get up, to make them think I was anxious to accompany them, but they would not allow it. "No, no, Gil Blas," said Rolando, "stay here, my boy; your pains might come on again; you shall come with us another time, but to-day you are not fit to go with us; rest all day; you need quiet." I thought I had better not insist too much for fear they should yield to my entreaties; but I looked quite annoyed at being unable to make one of the party; and I did this in so natural a manner that they all left the cavern without the least suspicion of my design. After their departure, which I endeavoured to hasten by my prayers, I said to myself: "Now, Gil Blas, now is the time to be resolved. Arm yourself with courage to complete what you have so happily begun. The affair seems to be easy. Domingo is not in a state to oppose your undertaking, and Leonarda cannot prevent you from carrying it out. Seize this opportunity of escaping; probably you will never find a more favourable one." These reflections inspired me with confidence. I got up, took my sword and my pistols, and went first of all to the kitchen; but before entering, as I heard Leonarda speaking, I stopped to listen. She was talking to the unknown lady, who had regained consciousness, and who, as she thought of all her misfortunes, was then weeping and in despair. "Weep, my child," said the old

woman, "give way to your tears, and do not spare sighs, it will comfort you. The sudden shock was too much for you, but there is no danger more, for you are crying. Your grief will abate by degrees, and you will grow accustomed to the society of our gentlemen, who are men of honour. You will be better treated than a princess; they will be excessively polite to you, and every day show you some marks of affection. Many a woman would like to be in your place."

I did not give Leonarda time to say anything more. I went in, and putting a pistol to her breast, commanded her, in a threatening manner, to give me the key of the grating. She was astounded by my act; and, though well-advanced in years, she felt sufficiently attached to life not to venture on a refusal. When I had the key in my hands, I addressed the distressed lady. "Madam," I said, "Heaven has sent you a deliverer; arise and follow me; I will conduct you wherever you please." The lady was not deaf to my proposal, and my words impressed her so much, that, summoning all her remaining strength, she rose, threw herself at my feet, and beseeched me to save her honour. I raised her, and assured her that she might rely on me. Then I took a rope which I found in the kitchen, and with her assistance, bound Leonarda to the legs of a large table, declaring that I would kill her if she uttered the slightest cry. The kind-hearted Leonarda,



persuaded that I would not fail to do so if she dared to resist me, thought fit to let me do whatever I liked. I lighted a candle, and went with the unknown to the room where the gold and silver coins were. I put in my pockets as many pistoles and double pistoles as they could hold; and, to encourage the lady to take away some too, I told her that she was only taking back her own, which she then did without scruple. When we had supplied ourselves well, we went towards the stable, which I entered alone, with my pistols cocked. I made sure that the old negro, in spite of his gout and rheumatism, would not quietly let me saddle and bridle my horse, and I was fully determined to give him a radical cure for all his ills if he should take it into his head to be troublesome. But, fortunately, he was at that time so overcome by the pains he had suffered, and by those which he suffered still, that I took my horse out of the stable without his even seeming to notice it. The lady awaited me at the door; and we were not long in threading the passage which led out of the cavern. Arrived at the grating, we opened it, and came at last to the trap-door. We had great difficulty in raising it; or, rather, to effect our purpose, we needed the additional force lent us by our desire to escape.

The day was just dawning when we emerged from that abyss. Our first object was to get as

far from it as possible. I leaped into the saddle, the lady got up behind me, and taking, at a gallop, the first road which offered itself, we were soon out of the forest. We came upon a plain intersected by several roads, one of which we took at random. I was half dead with fear lest it should lead to Mansilla, where we might meet Rolando and his comrades. This might easily have happened, but, fortunately, my fear was groundless. We reached the town of Astorga about two o'clock in the afternoon. I saw that the people watched us very closely, as though they had never seen a lady riding behind a gentleman. We dismounted at the first inn we came to, and I immediately ordered a partridge and a young rabbit to be put to the spit. Whilst they were carrying out my directions, and preparing our dinner, I led the lady to a room, where we began to converse, which we could not do on the road, because we had ridden so fast. She told me how grateful she was for the service I had just rendered her, and declared that, after so generous an act, she could not believe I was one of the gang of brigands from whom I had rescued her. I told her my story, to confirm her in the good opinion she had formed of me, and so induced her to confide in me, and to tell me of her misfortunes, which she recounted in the words of the chapter following.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HISTORY OF DONNA MENCIA DE MOSQUERA.

I WAS born at Valladolid, and my name is Donna Mencía de Mosquera. Don Martín, my father, after having spent almost the whole of his patrimony in active service, was slain in Portugal, at the head of his regiment. He left me so little property that I was not a very eligible match, though an only daughter. Yet I had no lack of admirers, in spite of the mediocrity of my fortune. Several of the noblest cavaliers in Spain sought me in marriage, but my favourite was Don Alvaro de Mello. He was indeed handsomer than his rivals; but more solid qualities determined me in his favour. He had intelligence, discretion, valour, and probity; and was, besides, a leader of society. If he gave an entertainment, it could not be done in better taste; and if he appeared in the lists, his vigour and skill were always admired. I therefore preferred him to all others, and I married him.

A few days after our wedding he met in a secluded spot, Don Andrea de Baesa,* who had been one of his rivals. They quarrelled with each other, and drew their swords. It

* This should be "Baeza," according to M. Llorente.

cost Don Andrea his life. As he was nephew to the Corregidor of Valladolid, a violent man and a mortal enemy to the house of Mello, Don Alvaro thought he could not soon enough leave the town. He returned home speedily, and, while they were saddling his horse, he told me what had just taken place. "My dear Mencía," he said, "we must separate. You know the corregidor. Let us not deceive ourselves; he will pursue me with the utmost rancour. You know what his influence is; I shall not be safe within the kingdom." He was so overwhelmed with his grief, and still more by the sorrow he saw I felt, that he could say no more. I made him take some gold and precious stones; then he clasped me in his arms, and for a quarter of an hour we did nothing but mingle our sighs and tears. At length they told him his horse was at the door. He tore himself away, and left me in a condition not to be described. How happy should I have been if excess of grief had killed me then! A few hours after Don Alvaro had gone, the corregidor heard of his flight. He made all the alguazils* of Valladolid pursue him, and spared no pains to get him into his power. My husband, however, disappointed his vengeance, and was able to

* An alguazil is an officer who executes the orders of the corregidor. A species of large spider is termed in Spain *alguasil de moscas*, the alguazil of the flies.

escape to safe quarters; so that the judge was compelled to confine his revenge to the satisfaction of taking the property of a man whose blood he would like to have shed. For this end he exerted his influence, and that not in vain, for the entire fortune of Don Alvaro was confiscated.

I remained in most distressing circumstances, and had hardly the means of subsistence. I began to lead a retired life, with but one female servant. I passed my days in bemoaning, not poverty, which I could bear with patience, but the absence of a beloved husband, from whom I received no tidings.

Yet he had promised me, during our sad moments of parting, to take care and keep me informed of his condition, into whatever part of the world his evil star might lead him. Nevertheless, seven years passed away without my hearing anything of him. The uncertainty in which I was concerning his fate afflicted me most deeply. At last I heard that, whilst fighting for the King of Portugal, in the kingdom of Fez, he had lost his life in battle. A man recently returned from Africa brought me this information, assuring me that he had been well acquainted with Don Alvaro de Mello, that he had served in the Portuguese army with him, and that he had seen him fall in action. He added other circumstances which finally convinced me that my husband was no

more. This news only served to increase my grief, and to make me resolve never to marry again. At that time Don Ambrosio Mesio Carrillo,* Marquis de la Guardia, came to Valladolid. He was one of these elderly noblemen who, by the gallantry and politeness of their manners, make people forget their age, and still contrive to please the fair sex. One day he happened to hear the story of Don Alvaro, and, from the picture which was drawn of me, he conceived a desire to see me. To satisfy his curiosity, he gained over one of my relatives, who, in concert with him, invited me to her house. The marquis was one of the party. He saw me, and I pleased him, in spite of the impression which grief had left on my countenance. But why do I say in spite of it? Perhaps he was touched simply by my sad and languishing air, which prepossessed him in favour of my fidelity? My melancholy may have given rise to his love. For he told me more than once that he regarded me as a miracle of constancy, and even that he envied the fate of my husband, however lamentable it might be in other respects. In a word, he was struck by my appearance, and had no need to see me a second time to resolve upon offering me his hand.

He employed the intervention of my kinswoman to induce me to give my consent. She paid me

* See INTRODUCTION.

a visit and pointed out that my husband having ended his days in Fez, as we had been informed, it was not reasonable to bury my charms any longer; that I had sufficiently bewailed a man with whom I had only been united for a few days; that I ought to profit by the opportunity which offered itself; and that I should be the happiest woman in the world. She then extolled the noble descent of the old marquis, his large estates, and his unblemished character; but it was in vain that she expatiated upon all the advantages he possessed; she could not persuade me. I did not doubt that Don Alvaro was dead, nor did the fear of seeing him return suddenly when I least expected it, restrain me. The slight inclination, or rather the repugnance with which I regarded a second marriage, after the sad issue of the first, was the only obstacle which my relative had to remove. But she was not disheartened; on the contrary, her zeal for Don Ambrosio redoubled, and she enlisted all my family to forward the interests of the old lord. My relatives urged me to accept so advantageous an offer; I was every moment beset, importuned, tormented. It is true that my wretchedness, which increased day by day, contributed not a little to overcome my resistance; nothing less than the terrible need I was in contributed to decide me.

I could not hold out any longer, I yielded

to their urgent entreaties, and was wedded to the Marquis de la Guardia, who on the day after our nuptials carried me to a very fine castle of his near Burgos, between Grajal and Rodillas. He conceived a violent love for me; the desire of pleasing me was visible in all his actions; he studied to anticipate my slightest wishes. Never had a husband such an affectionate regard for his wife, and never did a lover shew more complaisance to his mistress. I admired a man of so amiable a character; and I was partly consoled for the loss of Don Alvaro by the happiness I conferred on a nobleman like the marquis. I might have loved him passionately in spite of the disparity of our ages if I could have loved anyone after Don Alvaro. But a constant heart can never have a second passion. The remembrance of my first husband rendered vain all the kind efforts of the second to please me. I could repay his tenderness only with pure feelings of gratitude.

I was in this condition of mind when, breathing the fresh air at my window one day, I perceived a man who seemed to be a peasant in the garden looking attentively at me. I thought he was the gardener's assistant, and took little notice of him, but next day going again to the window I saw him in the same spot, and he seemed still bent on looking at me. Struck with this circumstance, I looked at him in my turn, and after gazing at him for some

time, I thought I could recognise the features of the unhappy Don Alvaro. This resemblance excited in me an emotion not to be conceived, and I uttered a piercing scream. I was then fortunately alone with Inez, who of all my attendants enjoyed the greatest share of my confidence. I told her of the surmise which agitated my mind. She only laughed at it, and fancied that a slight resemblance had deceived my eyes. "Take courage, madam," said she, "don't imagine that you have seen your first husband. Is it likely that he would be here in the guise of a peasant? Is it even credible that he is still alive? To set your mind at rest I will go down into the garden," added she, "and talk to this rustic; I shall find out who he is, and return in a moment to let you know." Inez accordingly went into the garden, but soon returned to my room, greatly moved. "Madam," she said, "your suspicion is but too well founded. It is Don Alvaro himself whom you have seen; he made himself known at once, and begs you to grant him a private interview."

As I could receive Don Alvaro that very moment, the marquis being at Burgos, I ordered my maid to bring him to my room by a private staircase. You may judge how agitated I was. I could not endure the sight of a man who had a right to overwhelm me with reproaches; and swooned as

soon as he came into my presence. Inez and he quickly flew to my assistance; and when I had recovered my senses, Don Alvaro said, "Madam, I beg you to compose yourself. Do not let my presence give you pain; I have no intention of causing you the slightest anxiety. I do not come as an enraged husband to call you to an account for your plighted troth, or to upbraid you with the second engagement you have entered into; I am well aware that it was owing to the importunity of your family; I have been informed of all their persecutions on that account. Besides it was rumoured in Valladolid that I was dead, and you had the more reason to believe it as no letter from me gave you any assurance to the contrary. I also know how you have lived since our cruel separation, and that necessity, rather than love, threw you into the marquis's arms." "Ah, sir," I interrupted him, weeping, "why will you make excuses for your wife? She is guilty since you are alive. Why am I not still in the wretched condition I was in before I married Don Ambrosio! O fatal marriage! Alas! I should at least, in my misery, have had the consolation of seeing you again without blushing."

"My dear Mencia," replied Don Alvaro, in a manner which betrayed how much he was moved by my tears, "I do not complain of you; and far from reproaching you with the

brilliant position in which I find you, I swear that I thank Heaven for it. Since the sad day of my departure from Valladolid, fate has always been against me. My life has been but a series of misfortunes; and to crown my woes, I had no means of communicating with you. Too certain of your love, I was ever picturing to myself the position to which my fatal affection had reduced you. I fancied Donna Mencia in tears; and this was the greatest of my sorrows. Sometimes, I must confess it, I reproached myself, as it were a crime, with the happiness of having pleased you. I wished that you had felt an inclination for one of my rivals, since the preference with which you had honoured me was costing you so dear. Yet after seven years of suffering, more in love with you than ever, I determined to see you once again. I could not resist this desire; and the expiration of a long slavery having furnished me with the power of indulging in it, I went to Valladolid in this disguise, at the risk of being discovered. There I learned all. Then I came to this castle, and I found means of introducing myself to the gardener, who has engaged me as a labourer. This is what I have done to obtain a private interview with you. But do not imagine that by my stay here I mean to disturb the happiness you enjoy; I love you more than myself; I shall not disturb your

peace, and, after this interview, I shall go and end, far from you, a life which has been so sad, and which I offer up on your shrine."

"No, Don Alvaro, no!" I exclaimed at these words, "Heaven has not brought you here for nothing, and I will not suffer you to leave me a second time; I will go away with you; death alone shall part us henceforth." "Take my advice," he replied, "remain with Don Ambrosio. Do not link yourself with my misfortunes, let me bear their whole weight." He said many other things of the same kind; but the more he seemed willing to sacrifice himself to my happiness, the less I felt disposed to consent to it. When he saw that I was firmly resolved to follow him, he suddenly changed his tone; and assuming a more cheerful air, he said: "Madam, is it possible that you are of this mind? Ah, since you still love me well enough to prefer my poverty to your present prosperity, let us go hence and dwell at Betancos, at the further end of Galicia.* I have there a safe retreat. Though my misfortunes have deprived me of my wealth, they have not made me lose all my friends. I have still some faithful ones, and they have provided me with the means of carrying you off. With their assistance I have had a carriage made at Zamora; I have bought mules and horses, and

* For Betancos, as well as for Grayal and Rodillas, mentioned before, see INTRODUCTION.

am accompanied by three determined Galicians. They are armed with carbines and pistols, and they await my orders at the village of Rodillas. Let us avail ourselves of the absence of Don Ambrosio," he continued. "I will send the carriage to the castle gate, and we shall set out instantly." I consented. Don Alvaro hastened to Rodillas, and shortly returned with his three attendants to carry me off from amidst my waiting-women, who, not knowing what to think of this abduction, took to their heels in terror. Inez alone was in the secret; but she refused to link her lot with mine, as she was in love with a valet of Don Ambrosio's, which shows that the attachment of the most faithful servants is not proof against love.

I accordingly entered the carriage with Don Alvaro, taking nothing with me but my clothes, and a few jewels which I had before my second marriage, for I would take nothing of what the marquis had given me when I became his wife. We travelled in the direction of Galicia, uncertain whether we should be fortunate enough to get there. We were afraid that Don Ambrosio on his return would pursue us with a large number of men, and overtake us. However, we travelled for two days without seeing any horsemen on our track; and we were hoping that the third day would pass in a similar manner, and were conversing very quietly. Don Alvaro was relating to me the



sad occurrence which had given rise to the report of his death, and how, after having been five years a slave, he recovered his liberty, when yesterday we met on the road to Leon the robbers in whose company you were. It was he whom they killed with all his attendants, and it is he for whom flow the tears which you see me shedding at this moment."

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNPLEASANT MANNER IN WHICH GIL BLAS
AND THE LADY WERE INTERRUPTED.

DONNA MENCIA burst into tears as she ended this narrative. Far from trying to console her by speeches in the style of Seneca, I allowed her to give free vent to her grief; I even wept myself, so natural is it for one to become interested for the unfortunate, and especially for a lovely woman in distress! I was about to ask her what plan she thought of adopting in her present circumstances, and it may be she was going to consult me on that point, when our conversation was interrupted by a great noise in the inn, which in spite of ourselves attracted our attention. This noise was caused by the arrival of the corregidor, attended by two alguazils and several guards. They

entered the room where we were. A young gentleman, who accompanied them, approached me first, and began to examine my dress. He did not need to look long. "By Saint Iago," he cried, "this is my doublet! It is the very thing, and as easy to recognise as my horse. You can arrest this spark on my testimony; I am not afraid of the risk of having to give him honourable satisfaction. I am certain he is one of the gang who have an undiscovered retreat in this district."

At this speech, from which I learned that my accuser was the gentleman who had been robbed, and whose spoils I unfortunately wore, I was astounded, confused, dismayed. The corregidor, whose office inclined him to draw a bad inference from my embarrassment rather than to explain it favourably, concluded that the accusation was not ill-founded; and presuming that the lady might be an accomplice, he ordered us to be thrown into prison and kept separate. This magistrate was not one of these who inspire terror by their looks; he appeared gentle and amiable. Heaven knows if he was any the better for that! As soon as I was in prison he came with his two ferrets, that is to say, his alguazils. They entered with a cheerful air, and apparently had a presentiment that they were about to do a good stroke of business. They did not forget their excellent custom, and began by rifling my

pockets. What a godsend for these gentlemen ! They had probably never had such a good haul. At every handful of pistoles which they drew out, I saw their eyes sparkle with joy. The corregidor, especially, seemed beside himself. "My lad," he said, with a most gentle voice, "we are doing our duty; but fear nothing, if you are not guilty no harm will come to you." Meanwhile, they very quietly emptied my pockets, and took even what the robbers had respected—I mean my uncle's forty ducats. They stuck at nothing ! Their greedy and indefatigable hands searched me all over from head to foot ; they whisked me round and round, and stripped me to see if I had not some money between my shirt and my skin. I believe they gladly would have opened my stomach to see if there was none inside. After they had thus dexterously discharged their duty, the corregidor put some questions to me. I frankly related to him all that had happened. He ordered my deposition to be taken in writing ; and then he went away with his men and my coins, leaving me without a rag on the straw.

"Such is life !" I exclaimed, when I found myself alone, and in this condition, "full of strange adventures and disappointments. Ever since I left Oviedo I have met with nothing but misfortunes : I am barely out of one peril before I fall into another. When I

reached this town I was far from thinking that I should so soon make acquaintance with the corregidor." Indulging in these useless reflections I again put on the cursed doublet, and the remainder of the suit which had brought me into trouble; then, exhorting myself to take courage, I said: "Come, Gil Blas, display thy fortitude; think that after this time you may be in better luck. Does it become you to despair in an ordinary prison after having had such a severe trial of patience in an underground cavern? But, alas!" I continued sadly, "I am deceiving myself. How can I get out of this? The means have just been taken from me; for a prisoner without money is a bird whose wings have been clipped."

Instead of the partridge and young rabbit which I had ordered to be put to the spit, they brought me a little brown bread with a pitcher of water, and left me to fret at leisure in my dungeon. I remained there a whole fortnight without seeing anyone but the gaoler, who took care to come every morning and renew my provisions for the day. Whenever he made his appearance I attempted to speak to him, and tried to get into conversation in order to drive away dulness a little; but the fellow answered nothing to all I said. It was impossible to extract a word from him; indeed, he generally came in and went out without looking at me. On the sixteenth day the corregidor

appeared and said: "At last, my friend, your troubles are ended; you may give yourself up to joy; I am come to bring you good news. I have ordered the lady who was with you to be taken to Burgos; I examined her before her departure, and her answers have exculpated you. You shall be set at liberty to-day, provided the muleteer with whom, as you say, you came from Pegnaflor to Cacabelos, confirms your deposition. He is now in Astorga; I have sent for him, and am expecting him. If he confirms the story of the rack, I shall immediately set you free."

These words delighted me. Thenceforth, I thought myself out of the scrape. I thanked the judge for the excellent and speedy justice he meant to render me, and had not quite finished my compliment when the muleteer and two of the guard made their appearance. I knew him at once; but the scoundrel of a muleteer, who had doubtless sold my portmanteau with all its contents, and fearing that he should be obliged to restore the money he had received for it, if he confessed that he recognised me, impudently declared that he did not know who I was, and had never seen me before in his life. "Oh, you villain!" I cried, "rather confess that you have sold my clothes, and bear witness to the truth. Look at me well; I am one of the young men whom you threatened with the rack in the

borough of Cacabelos, and whom you frightened so greatly." The muleteer coolly replied that I was talking of something whereof he had no knowledge whatever; and as he maintained to the last that I was unknown to him, my restoration to liberty was deferred. "My lad," said the corregidor, "you see the muleteer does not agree with what you have said; so I cannot restore you to liberty, however much I wish to do so." I was obliged anew to arm myself with patience, to make up my mind still to fast on bread and water, and to see no one but the silent gaoler. The thought that I could not extricate myself from the clutches of the law, although I was guiltless of the slightest crime, plunged me into despair. I regretted leaving the underground cavern. "After all," said I, "I was less disagreeably situated than in this dungeon: I had plenty to eat and to drink with the robbers, I cracked jokes with them, and lived in the sweet hope of making my escape. But now, in spite of my innocence, I may perhaps consider myself happy if I leave my dungeon in order to go to the galleys."

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW GIL BLAS AT LENGTH GOT OUT OF PRISON,
AND WHERE HE WENT.

WHILE I passed my days in entertaining myself with my reflections, my adventures, as I had related them in my deposition, were bruited all about the town. Several persons wished to see me out of curiosity. They came one after another peeping in at a little window which admitted light into my prison, and when they had looked at me for some time they went away. I was surprised at this novelty. Since I had been a prisoner I had not seen a single person at that window, which looked on a court where gloom and silence reigned. This gave me to understand that there was some talk about me in town; but I did not know whether to draw thence a favourable or an unfavourable omen.

One of my first visitors was the little chorister of Mondognedo, who had dreaded the rack as well as myself, and had taken to flight. I knew him again, and he did not pretend to have forgotten me. We nodded to each other; and then we had a long conversation. I was obliged again to go through my adventures, which had a double effect on the minds of my audiences, for I made them

laugh, and I attracted their pity. The chorister, on his part, told me what had happened in the inn at Cacabelos between the muleteer and the newly-married woman, after we had taken to our heels in a panic; in a word, he told me all that I have already related. Then, on taking leave of me, he promised that, without loss of time, he would exert himself for my release. All the people who, like him, had come there out of curiosity, assured me that my misfortune excited their compassion; and they even promised that they would assist the young chorister, and do their utmost to procure my liberty.

In fact, they kept their word. They spoke in my favour to the corregidor, who, no longer doubting my innocence, especially after he had heard the chorister's story, came to my prison three weeks later. "Gil Blas," he said, "I might still keep you here, if I were a more severe judge; but I do not wish to protract matters: begone, you are free, you may depart whenever you please. But tell me," he continued; "if you were taken to the forest, could you not discover where the cavern is?" "No, sir," I replied; "as I only entered it by night, and left it before daylight, it would be impossible to recognise the spot." Then the magistrate retired, saying that he would order the prison doors to be opened for me. Accordingly, a moment later

the gaoler came to my dungeon with one of his turnkeys, carrying a bundle of clothes. They both gravely, and without saying a single word, took off my doublet and trousers, which were of fine and almost new cloth; then, having put an old smock frock on me, they shoved me out by the shoulders.

The confusion I was in at being so ill-clad moderated the joy prisoners usually feel on regaining their liberty. I was tempted to leave the town that very hour, to avoid being seen by the people, whose looks I could scarcely endure. But my gratitude got the better of my shame; I went to thank the little chorister, to whom I owed so much. He could not help laughing when he saw me. "What a figure you are!" he cried; "I did not recognise you at first in that dress; justice, it seems, has made sport of you in every way." "I do not complain of the laws," I replied, "they are very just; I only wish that all their officers were honest men; they might at least have left me my clothes; I think I have paid handsomely for them." "I agree with you," he said; "but they will tell you that there are certain formalities which must be observed. Do you fancy, for instance, that your horse has been restored to its rightful owner? Not a bit of it; it is at this moment in the stable of the magistrate's clerk, where it has been impounded as a proof of the theft. I don't believe the

poor gentleman will ever get so much as the crupper. But let us change the subject," he continued. "What is your plan? What do you intend to do now?" "I want," said I, "to start for Burgos. I shall go and look for the lady whom I rescued: she will give me a few pistoles, and then I shall buy a new cassock, and go to Salamanca, where I shall try to turn my Latin to some advantage. The only thing that troubles me is how to get to Burgos. I must live on the road; you know one meets with but poor cheer when travelling without money." "I understand you," he replied, "but take my purse. Of a truth it is rather thinly lined; but you know a chorister is not a bishop." At the same time he took it out of his pocket, and put it in my hands with so good a grace that I could not help accepting it, such as it was. I thanked him, as if he had given me all the gold in the world, and made him a thousand promises, which never came to anything. After this I left him, and departed from the town without calling on any of the other persons who had assisted me in regaining my liberty. I satisfied myself with blessing them a thousand times in my heart.

The little chorister was right not to boast of his purse. I found very few coins in it,—and such coins!—only small change. Fortunately, I had been accustomed for these two months to very frugal fare, and I had still a few reals

left when I reached the borough of Ponte de Mula, not far from Burgos. There I halted, to inquire after Donna Mencia. I went into an inn, the hostess of which was a small woman, very withered, sharp, and haggard looking. I saw at once, from the disdainful glance she cast at me, that my smock frock was scarcely to her taste; but this I freely pardoned her. I sat down, ate some bread and cheese, and drank a few glasses of an execrable wine with which they served me. During this meal, which was in keeping with my dress, I tried to enter into conversation with the landlady, who gave me to understand, by her scornful gestures, that she despised my talk. I begged her to tell me if she knew the Marquis de la Guardia, if his castle was far out of town, and, especially, if she knew what had become of his lady, the marchioness. "You ask plenty questions," she replied, with a disdainful look. Nevertheless, she told me, though with a very bad grace, that the castle of Don Ambrosio was only a short league from Ponte de Mula.

After I had done eating and drinking, as it was night, I mentioned that I should like to go to bed, and asked for a room. "A room for you!" cried the landlady, darting at me a look full of scorn; "I have no room for people who make their supper of a bit of cheese. All my beds are engaged. I expect gentlemen of

importance, who are to sleep here to-night. All I can do for you is to put you in my barn : I fancy it will not be the first time you have slept on straw." She spoke the truth without knowing it. I did not answer her speech, and wisely determined to slink to my straw-bed, on which I soon fell asleep, like a man long used to fatigue.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RECEPTION WHICH DONNA MENCIA GAVE
GIL BLAS AT BURGOS.

I WAS not long in getting up the next morning. I went to settle with the landlady, who was already astir, and who seemed a little less lofty, and in a better humour than she had been the evening before ; which I attributed to the presence of three honest soldiers of the Holy Brotherhood, who were conversing with her in a very familiar manner. They had slept in the inn ; and it was doubtless for these gentlemen of importance that all the beds had been retained.

I inquired in the borough my way to the castle whither I wished to go. By chance I addressed myself to a man of the same character as my landlord at Pegnaflor. He was not content

with answering my question, but informed me that Don Ambrosio had been dead three weeks, and that the marchioness, his wife, had retired to a convent at Burgos, which he named. I walked on at once to that town instead of pursuing my way to the castle, as I had intended, and hastened straight to the nunnery where Donna Mencia was living. I besought the portress to tell this lady that a young man just discharged from the prison of Astorga wished to speak to her. The portress went immediately and did my message as I asked her; she returned a moment after and led me into a parlour, where I had not been long before the widow of Don Ambrosio appeared behind a grating in deep mourning.

“You are welcome,” said the lady graciously. “Four days ago I wrote to a person at Astorga, and asked him to find you out and to tell you that I urgently entreated you to come to me as soon as you were released from prison. I did not doubt of your soon being discharged: what I had told the corregidor in your exculpation was sufficient for that. I received an answer that you had recovered your liberty, but that no one knew what had become of you. I was afraid that I should never see you again, and be deprived of the pleasure of testifying to you my gratitude, which would have greatly mortified me. Console yourself,” she added, observing the shame I felt in presenting myself

before her in such a wretched garb; "let your present condition give you no uneasiness. After the important service you have rendered me, I should be the most ungrateful of my sex if I did nothing for you. I mean to extricate you from your miserable situation; it is my duty, and the means are in my power. I have sufficient wealth to be able to acquit myself of my debt to you without putting myself to inconvenience.

"You know," she continued, "all that befell me up to the day when we were both thrown into prison. I will now tell you what has happened since then. When the corregidor of Astorga ordered me to be taken to Burgos, after hearing from my lips a faithful version of my adventures, I betook myself to the castle of Ambrosio. My return thither caused extreme surprise; but I was told I came too late; that the marquis, thunderstruck by my flight, had fallen ill, and that the doctors despaired of his recovery. This was a fresh reason for me to complain of the harshness of my fate. However, I made them tell him that I had arrived. Then I entered his room, and ran to cast myself on my knees by his bedside, my face covered with tears, and my heart oppressed by the deepest grief." "What brings you here?" said he, as soon as he saw me. "Have you come to contemplate your work? Was it not enough to take

my life? Will you not be satisfied without being an eye-witness to my death?" "My lord," I replied, "Inez must have told you that I fled with my first husband; and but for the sad accident which has deprived me of him, you would never have seen me again." Then I told him that Don Alvaro had been slain by robbers, and that they had carried me off to an underground cavern. I related all the further details of my story; and when I had finished, Don Ambrosio held out his hand to me. "Enough," said he tenderly, "I will make no more complaints. Alas! have I any right to reproach you? You recover a dear husband; you abandon me to follow him; can I blame such conduct? No, madam, I should be wrong to do so. Therefore, I gave orders not to pursue you, although my death was the result of the misfortune of losing you. I respected the sacred rights of him who carried you off, and even the attachment you felt for him. In short, I do you justice, and by your return hither you regain all my affection. Yes, my dear Mencia, your presence overwhelms me with joy; but, alas! I shall not long enjoy it. I feel my end approaching. Hardly are you restored to me than I must bid you an eternal farewell." At these touching words my tears flowed more copiously; I felt and showed deep affliction. The death of Don Alvaro, whom I

adored, caused me fewer tears. Don Ambrosio was not wrong in the presentiment of his death, which happened on the next day; and I remained mistress of a considerable jointure, settled on me when we were married. I do not intend to make an unworthy use of it. Though I am still young the world shall never see me in the arms of a third husband. It seems to me that such conduct is only possible for those of our sex who have no feelings of modesty or delicacy; moreover, I assure you that I care no more for the world; and that I mean to end my days in this convent, and to become a benefactress to it."

Such were the words Donna Mencia addressed to me. Then she drew from her dress a purse which she put into my hands, saying: "Here are a hundred ducats which I give you merely to procure clothes. After that, come and see me again; I do not mean to confine my gratitude to such a trifle." I returned the lady a thousand thanks, and promised solemnly that I would not depart from Burgos without taking leave of her. Having given this pledge, which I had no mind to break, I went to look for an inn. I entered the first I came to, asked for a room, and to counteract the bad impression which my smock-frock might give the landlord, I told him that, notwithstanding my appearance, I was well able to pay for my lodging. At

these words the landlord, whose name was Majuelo,¹ and a great wag, surveyed me from top to toe, told me with a cold and sarcastic air that he did not need this assurance to be persuaded that I should spend plenty in his house, that he discovered something noble through my dress, and that in short he did not doubt that I was a gentleman of means. I plainly perceived that the rascal was laughing at me ; and to put an end forthwith to his jokes, I showed him my purse. I even counted out my ducats on a table before him, and saw that my coin disposed him to judge me more favourably. I asked him to send for a tailor. " You had better," said he, " send for a second-hand dealer ; he will bring you all sorts of clothes, and you will be dressed in a trice." I approved this suggestion, and resolved to follow it ; but as the day was closing in, I put off the purchase till the morrow, and thought of nothing but making a good supper, to indemnify me for the wretched meals I had had since leaving the cavern.

¹ *Majuelo* is the Spanish for a little vineyard ; a significant name for a landlord ; it also means " a boaster."

CHAPTER XV.

HOW GIL BLAS DRESSED HIMSELF, OF THE FRESH
PRESENT WHICH HE RECEIVED FROM THE LADY,
AND THE STYLE IN WHICH HE LEFT BURGOS.

THEY brought me a goodly fricassee of sheep's trotters, of which I ate almost the whole. I drank in proportion, and then went to bed. I had a pretty comfortable bed, and trusted that a sound sleep would soon overtake me, and yet I could not close my eyes; I thought only of the dress I ought to choose. "What am I to do?" said I. "Shall I follow my first plan? Shall I buy a cassock to go to Salamanca, and look out for a tutor's place? Why dress myself as a licentiate? Do I desire to devote myself to an ecclesiastical calling? Do I feel an inward call for it? No, the very reverse. I want to wear a sword, and try to make my way in the world:" and this is what I decided.

I resolved to choose a gentleman's dress, persuaded that in this guise I could not fail to obtain some honourable and lucrative position. In this flattering idea I waited for day with the utmost impatience, and I no sooner perceived the first rays of light than I got up. I made so much noise in the inn that I woke all who were asleep. I called for the waiters, who were still in bed, and who only replied to me by

loading me with curses. Nevertheless they were obliged to get up, and I gave them no rest until they had fetched a second-hand clothes' dealer, who was followed by two lads each carrying a large bundle of green cloth, and who saluted me in a very civil manner. "Honoured sir," he said, "it is very fortunate for you that you applied to me, rather than to any one else. I do not want to disparage my fellow-dealers; God forbid I should lower their repute in the slightest! But between ourselves, there is not one of them with a conscience. They are all more extortionate than Jews. I am the only second-hand dealer that has any honesty; I confine myself to a reasonable profit. I am content with a pound in the penny—I should say with a penny in the pound. Thank Heaven! I carry on my trade on the square."

The dealer, after this preamble, which I stupidly took as literally true, told the lads to undo their parcels. They showed me suits in various colours, and others made of plain cloth. I rejected these with scorn, because I thought them too quiet, but they made me try on one, which fitted me as well as if I had been measured for it, and which took my fancy, though it was a little the worse for wear. It consisted of a doublet, with slashed sleeves, with breeches and cloak, all in blue velvet embroidered with gold. I liked that, and inquired the price. The dealer, who saw that it pleased me, observed

that I had a refined taste. "By all that is sacred!" he cried, "one can see that you know what you are about. I tell you that that suit was made for one of the greatest lords in the kingdom, who did not wear it thrice. Examine the velvet, nothing can be finer; and as for the embroidery, confess that it could not be better done." "What is the price of it?" I asked. "Sixty ducats," he replied. "I have refused that sum, or else I am a rogue." The alternative was convincing. I offered forty-five; it was worth about half. "Sir," said the dealer, with an air of indifference, "I never ask too much; I have only one price. Here," he continued, offering me the suits which I had declined, "take these; I can sell you them cheaper." All this only stimulated the desire I had to buy the one I was bargaining for; and as I thought he would abate nothing, I counted out the sixty ducats. When he saw me part with them so readily, I fancy that, in spite of his honesty, he was much vexed he had not asked me for more. However, pleased enough to have earned his pound in the penny, he went off with his lads, to whom also I gave something for their trouble.¹

I had now a very decent cloak, doublet, and

¹ In the tenth chapter of the tenth book of *Gil Blas*, Lesage lets Scipio relate a story of the roguery of Señor Ybaguez, a second-hand clothes dealer from Segovia, who does not sell a cast-off suit at too high a price, as the dealer mentioned above, but buys far below its value the stage dress of the youthful actor representing the King of Leon.

breeches, but I had still to provide the rest of the outfit, which occupied me all the morning. I bought some linen, a hat, silk stockings, shoes, and a sword; after which I dressed myself. What pleasure I took in seeing myself so well equipped! My eyes could not be satiated, so to speak, with my attire. Never did a peacock behold his own plumage with greater satisfaction. That very day I paid a second visit to Donna Mencía, who received me again most affably. She thanked me afresh for the service I had rendered her. Thereupon followed high compliments on both sides. Then, wishing me every kind of prosperity, she bade me farewell, and retired, without giving me anything but a ring worth thirty pistoles, which she begged me to keep in remembrance of her.

I looked very foolish with my ring! I had reckoned on a more considerable present. Ill satisfied, therefore, with the generosity of the lady, I returned to my inn, in a thoughtful mood; but as I was entering, a man, who had followed me close all the way, came in likewise; and suddenly throwing off the cloak in which he was muffled, discovered a big bag which he carried under his arm. On perceiving the bag, which looked as if it was full of money, I opened my eyes wide, as did also several persons who were present; and I thought I was listening to the voice of an angel, when the man, laying the bag on the table, said to me: "Señor Gil Blas,

here is something that my lady the Marchioness has sent you." I made a low bow to the bearer. I overwhelmed him with civilities; and as soon as he was out of the inn, I darted upon the bag like a hawk on its quarry, and carried it off to my room. I unfastened it without loss of time, and found in it a thousand ducats. I had just counted them, when the landlord, who had heard what the bearer said, came in to know what there was in the bag. The sight of my coins, spread out on the table made a great impression on him. "The deuce!" cried he, "here's a lot of money! You must know how to manage the ladies well," said he, with a satirical smile. "You have only been four and twenty hours in Burgos, and you have already laid Marchionesses under contribution."

The speech did not displease me; I was tempted to leave Majuelo in his mistake; I felt that it delighted me. I am not astonished that young men like to pass for men of intrigue. But the innocence of my morals got the better of my vanity. I undeceived my landlord. I related to him the history of Donna Mencía, to which he listened very attentively. I then told him the state of my affairs; and as he seemed to take an interest in me, I besought him to aid me with his advice. He mused a few moments; then said to me with a serious air: "Señor Gil Blas, I like you; and as you trust me sufficiently to speak openly with me, I will say without

flattery what I think you are fit for. You seem designed by nature for the court. I advise you to go there, and attach yourself to some great lord. But try to get in business relations with him, or to join in his pleasures; otherwise you will waste your time. I know the great: they count for nothing the zeal and attachment of an honest man and only care for those who are necessary to them. You have another string to your bow," he continued. "You are young and good looking, and, even if you had no intelligence, that is more than is needed to turn the head of a rich widow, or of some pretty woman, who has made an ill-suited marriage. If love ruins men who have wealth, it often maintains those who have none. I advise you, therefore, to go to Madrid; but you should not appear there without attendants. There, as elsewhere, men judge from appearances, and you will be considered there only in proportion to the figure you make. I shall recommend to you a servant, a faithful domestic, a discreet lad, in a word a man whom I have taught. Buy a couple of mules, one for yourself, the other for him; and start as soon as possible."

This advice was too much to my taste not to be followed. The next day I bought two fine mules, and I engaged the servant whom he had recommended. He was a young man of thirty, of a simple and pious aspect. He told me he was a native of Galicia, and that

his name was Ambrose de Lamela. It struck me as singular that, instead of being like other servants, who can never ask for high enough wages, this one did not mind them at all; he even assured me that he would be satisfied with whatever I might choose to give him. I also bought a pair of boots, with a portmanteau to hold my linen and my ducats. Then I settled with my landlord; and next morning, before dawn, I left Burgos for Madrid.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHICH SHOWS THAT WE MUST NOT RELY TOO MUCH
ON PROSPERITY.

WE slept the first night at Duegnas, and on the second day arrived at Valladolid, about four in the afternoon. We alighted at an inn which seemed one of the best in the town. I left the charge of the mules to my servant, and went upstairs to a room, whither I ordered my portmanteau to be carried by a waiter. As I felt slightly tired, I threw myself on my bed without taking off my boots, and gradually fell asleep. It was almost night when I awoke. I called for Ambrose. He was not in the inn, but he soon made his appearance. I asked him where he had been; he replied with a pious air that he had just come from church,

where he had been to thank Heaven for having preserved us from all perils and dangers between Burgos and Valladolid. I approved of his conduct, then I ordered a fowl to be roasted for my supper.

Whilst I was giving him this order my landlord entered with a taper in his hand, and ushered in a lady who seemed rather handsome than young, and was very richly attired. She was leaning on an old squire, and a little black-moor carried her train. I was not a little surprised when this lady, after having made a low curtsy, asked if I were not Señor Gil Blas of Santillana. I had no sooner answered in the affirmative than she left the arm of her squire, and came and embraced me with an excess of joy which increased my astonishment. "Heaven be praised," she cried, "for this meeting! It is you, noble Sir, whom I was looking for." At this preamble I was reminded of the parasite of Pegnaflor, and began to suspect the lady of being a mere adventuress; but when she continued her speech she gave me a more favourable opinion of her. "I am," she said, "first cousin to Donna Mencia de Mosquera, who is so much indebted to you. This very morning I received a letter from her. She writes that, having learned that you were going to Madrid, she begged me to entertain you handsomely, if you should pass this way. I have been these two hours running all over the town, and gone



from inn to inn to enquire what strangers were in the house ; and I judged, from the description your landlord gave me of you, that you might be the deliverer of my cousin. Ah ! since I have met you," she continued, " I will show you how grateful I am for the services rendered to my family, and especially to my dear cousin. You must please come at once and stay with me ; you will be more comfortable in my house than here." I would have excused myself, and represented to the lady that I might inconvenience her : but there was no resisting her importunities. There was a carriage waiting for us at the door of the inn. She herself took care to have my portmanteau put inside, "for," said she, "there are many rogues in Valladolid," which was only too true. Then I got into the carriage with her and her old squire, and thus let myself be carried off bodily from the inn, to the great displeasure of the landlord, who saw himself deprived of the money which he had expected I should spend at his house, with the lady, the groom, and the little blackamoor.

Our carriage stopped after proceeding some distance. We alighted, entered a pretty large house, and went upstairs into a room, by no means ill-furnished, and illuminated by twenty or thirty wax candles. There were several servants there, of whom the lady inquired whether Don Raphael had come in. They

answered no. Then addressing me she said : “ Señor Gil Blas, I am expecting my brother, who is to return to-night from a country seat of ours, about two leagues from here. What a pleasant surprise it will be for him to find in his house a gentleman to whom our whole family is so indebted ! ” As she finished speaking we heard a noise, and we were told it was caused by the arrival of Don Raphael. This gentleman soon appeared. He was a young man of handsome figure, and very good address. “ I am delighted that you have returned, brother,” said the lady; “ you will help me to entertain Señor Gil Blas of Santillana. We cannot be too grateful for what he has done for Donna Mencía, our relative. Here, read this letter she has sent me.” Don Raphael opened the note, and read aloud :—“ My dear Camilla, Señor Gil Blas of Santillana, who has preserved my honour as well as my life, has just left for the court. He will doubtless pass through Valladolid. I entreat you by the ties of kindred, and still more by the friendship which unites us, to entertain him and keep him some time with you. I flatter myself that you will please me in this, and that my deliverer will receive from you and from my cousin Don Raphael, every kind of civility.—Burgos.—Your affectionate cousin, DONNA MENCIA.”

“ What,” cried Don Raphael, after having read the letter, “ it is to this gentleman that my kins-

woman owes her honour and her life! Ah, Heaven be praised for this happy meeting." So saying he approached me, and pressing me in his arms: "How delighted I am," he continued, "in seeing Señor Gil Blas of Santillana! My cousin the marchioness had no occasion to recommend us to entertain you; she had only to tell us that you were passing through Valladolid: that would have been enough. My sister Camilla and I know well how to treat a man who has rendered the greatest service in the world to that member of our family whom we love best." I replied as well as I could to these remarks, which were followed by many others of the same kind, and interspersed with a thousand compliments. After which, perceiving that I still had on my boots, he ordered his servants to take them off.

We then went into another room where supper was served. We sat down to table, the gentleman, the lady, and I. They said a hundred obliging things to me during supper. Not a word escaped me that they did not extol as an admirable witticism; and it was surprising to see how attentive they were in helping me from every dish. Don Raphael frequently drank to the health of Donna Mencia. I followed his example; and it seemed to me sometimes that Camilla, who drank with us, darted significant looks at me. I even thought I observed that she watched her opportunities, as though she

feared her brother would perceive it. No more was needed to persuade me that the lady was smitten, and I flattered myself that I would profit by this discovery, if I should remain in Valladolid. This hope induced me to yield without difficulty to their entreaties that I would pass a few days with them. They thanked me for my acceding to their request; and the pleasure betrayed by Camilla confirmed me in my opinion that I had found favour in her eyes.

Don Raphael, seeing me willing to stay with him some time, proposed to take me to his country house. He gave me a glowing description of it, and spoke of the pleasures he meant to give me there. "Sometimes," he said, "we shall amuse ourselves with hunting, sometimes with fishing; and if you like walking we have delightful woods and gardens. Besides, we shall have a good deal of company; I hope you will not find the time hang heavy on your hands." I accepted the invitation, and it was resolved that we should go to this fine country house the next day. We rose from table as we agreed upon this pleasant plan. Don Raphael appeared in ecstasy: "Señor Gil Blas," he said, embracing me, "I leave you with my sister. I am going at once to give the necessary orders, and send invitations to all whom I wish to be of the party." At these words he left the room where we were sitting; and I continued to converse with the lady, who did not contradict by her

speech the soft glances which she had cast on me. She took my hand, and looking at my ring, said : "You have a pretty enough diamond, there, but it is very small. Are you a connoisseur in precious stones?" I replied that I was not. "I am sorry for that," she replied, "for you might have told me what this one is worth." As she spoke she showed me a large ruby on her finger ; and while I was examining it, she said : "One of my uncles, who was governor of the Spanish settlements in the Philippine islands, gave me this ruby. The jewellers of Valladolid value it at three hundred pistoles." "I do not doubt it," said I, "I think it a very fine stone." "As you like it" she rejoined, "I shall make an exchange with you." Immediately she took off my ring, and put her own on my little finger. After this exchange, which seemed to me a genteel way of making a present, Camilla squeezed my hand and looked at me tenderly ; then all on a sudden, breaking off the conversation, she wished me good night and retired in confusion, as if ashamed at the indiscreet disclosure of her feelings.

Though a very novice in gallantry I felt how flattering this sudden retreat was to me ; and I concluded that I should not pass my time very disagreeably in the country. Full of this flattering idea, and of the splendid turn my affairs were taking, I locked the door of the room where I was to sleep, after telling my

servant to come and wake me early in the morning. Instead of going to sleep, I abandoned myself to the pleasant reflections with which my portmanteau, which was upon the table, and my ruby inspired me. "Thank Heaven," said I, "if I have been unfortunate, I am so no longer! A thousand ducats in the first place, a ring worth three hundred pistoles in the second: I am rich for a long time to come. I see now that Majuelo was not flattering me: I shall inflame the hearts of a thousand ladies in Madrid, since I have so easily pleased Camilla." The favours of this generous lady presented themselves to my mind with all their charms, and I also tasted in anticipation the pleasures which Don Raphael was preparing for me in his country seat. At last, amid so many pleasant images, sleep shed her poppies over me, and as soon as I felt myself grow drowsy I undressed and went to bed.

The next morning, when I awoke I perceived that it was rather late. I was quite surprised not to see my servant make his appearance after the order I had given him. "Ambrose," I said to myself, "my faithful Ambrose, is at church, or else he is very lazy to-day." But I soon lost this opinion of him, and conceived one very much worse; for having got out of bed, and not seeing my portmanteau, I suspected him of having stolen it in the night. To clear up my suspicions I opened the door of my

room, and called the hypocrite several times. There came at my call an old man, who said, "What do you want, sir? All your people left my house before daybreak." "How! Your house?" I cried. "Am I not here in Don Raphael's house?" "I do not know that gentleman," replied he; "you are in furnished lodgings, and I am the landlord. Last night, an hour before your arrival, the lady who supped with you came here, and engaged this room for a great lord, travelling *incognito*, as she said. She even paid me in advance."

Then I saw all. I knew what I might think of Camilla and Don Raphael; and it was clear to me that my servant, having a thorough knowledge of my affairs, had betrayed me to these rogues. Instead of laying the blame of this sad business on myself alone, and considering that it would not have happened if I had not been so indiscreet as to confide in Majuelo without any necessity, I imputed it all to innocent Fortune, and cursed my star a hundred times. The landlord of the furnished lodgings, to whom I related the adventure, which he probably knew as well as I did, seemed affected by my grief. He pitied me, and declared that he was deeply mortified that such a scene had passed in his house; but I fancy, in spite of his protestations, that he had an equal share in this swindle with mine host at Burgos, to whom I have always ascribed the honour of planning it.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT GIL BLAS DID AFTER THE ADVENTURE OF
THE FURNISHED LODGINGS.

AFTER vainly lamenting my misfortune I reflected that, instead of giving way to my sorrow, I ought rather to nerve myself against my unhappy fate. I summoned my courage, and by way of comfort said to myself, as I was dressing: "I am tolerably lucky that the rascals have not carried off my clothes, and the few ducats I have in my pockets." I gave them credit for being so considerate. They had even been generous enough to leave me my boots, which I sold to the landlord for a third of what they cost me. At last I emerged from the lodgings without needing anyone, thank Heaven, to carry my luggage. The first thing I did was to see if my mules were still at the inn where I had alighted the day before. I was right in thinking that Ambrose had not left them behind, and would to Heaven I had always judged his character as sensibly! I learned that he had taken care to fetch them the night before. Thus not expecting to see them again, any more than my portmanteau, I strolled about the streets sadly, musing as to what I ought to do. I was tempted to return to Burgos, in order once again to have recourse to Donna Mencía; but

reflecting that this would be abusing the kindness of that lady, and that moreover I should look like a fool, I abandoned the idea. I also made a vow that for the future I would be on my guard against women; I should at that moment have distrusted even the chaste Susanna. From time to time my eyes fell upon my ring; and when I thought that it was a present of Camilla, I sighed with vexation. "Alas," I said to myself, "I am no judge of rubies, but I know the value of the people who exchange them. I do not think I need go to a jeweller to be convinced that I am a fool."

At the same time I could not help wishing to know what my ring was worth, and I went and showed it to a lapidary, who valued it at three ducats. On hearing this estimate, though it did not astonish me, I sent the niece of the governor of the Philippine islands to the deuce, or rather I did but send back to him his own. As I was coming out of the lapidary's shop a young man who was passing stopped to look at me. I did not recollect him at first, though his features were perfectly familiar to me. "Why, Gil Blas," said he, "do you pretend not to know me? or have two years so changed the son of barber Nunez that you do not recognise him? Do you not remember Fabricio, your townsman and school-fellow? We used to dispute so often at Dr Godinez's upon universals and metaphysics."

I remembered him before he had done speaking, and we embraced each other cordially. "Well, my friend," he continued, "I am delighted to meet you. I cannot express the joy I feel. . . . But," he added with an air of surprise, "in what condition do I behold you? Ods life, you are dressed like a prince! A fine sword, silk stockings, a velvet doublet and cloak, with silver embroideries.* Plague take it! that looks devilish like intrigues. I will lay a wager that some liberal old lady has been sharing with you generously." "You are mistaken," said I. "My affairs are not so flourishing as you imagine." "That won't do for me," he replied, "that won't do; you wish to be discreet. And that fine ruby that I see on your finger, Mr Gil Blas, whence comes that, pray?" "It comes," I answered, "from an arrant jade. Fabricio, my dear Fabricio, far from being the darling of the ladies of Valladolid, I tell you, my friend, that I am their dupe."

I uttered these last words so sadly that Fabricio clearly saw that I had been victimised. He pressed me to tell him why I thus complained of the fair sex. I was easily persuaded to satisfy his curiosity; but as I had a long story to tell, and as moreover we did not wish to part from each other in a hurry, we went

* The blue velvet suit embroidered with gold which Gil Blas bought in the fifteenth chapter has become suddenly changed into a suit with silver embroidery.

into an inn, in order to converse more at our ease. There I related to him, as we were breakfasting, all that had happened to me since I left Oviedo. He thought my adventures very strange; and after assuring me that he greatly sympathized with me in my vexatious position, said: "We must console ourselves, my dear fellow, in all the misfortunes of this life; this is the only difference between a strong and courageous mind and a weak one. If a man of mettle is in distress, he waits patiently for more fortunate times. Never, as Cicero says, should one be so depressed as to forget that one is a man. For my own part, I am just of that disposition; my misfortunes never overwhelm me; I am always above bad fortune. For instance, I was in love with a girl of good family in Oviedo; I was loved by her; I asked her in marriage from her father, and he refused. Another would have perished of grief. I—admire my strength of mind!—I carried the little one off. She was passionate, thoughtless, and a flirt; pleasure, therefore, continually swayed her, to the neglect of duty. I took her for a tour in Galicia for six months; then, as I had given her a taste for travelling, she wanted to go to Portugal, but she took another travelling companion. Another cause of despair, yet I did not give way under this fresh misfortune; and, wiser than Menelaus, instead of taking the offensive against the Paris who had filched my Helen, I

held myself indebted to him for taking her off my hands. After that, not wishing to return to the Asturias, in order to avoid any controversy with justice, I made for the kingdom of Leon, spending in the successive towns the money which remained after my elopement with the infanta—for we had neither of us left Oviedo empty handed, and were not ill supplied. But all I had possessed was soon squandered. I reached Palencia with a solitary ducat, out of which I was obliged to buy a pair of shoes. The money that was left did not carry me far. My situation became embarrassing; I was already putting myself on a strict diet: it was necessary that I should at once turn to something. I resolved to go into service. I first took a place with a cloth merchant in a large way, whose son was a rake. There I had no need to fast, but at the same time I was vastly perplexed. The father ordered me to play the spy on his son; the son entreated me to help him to deceive his father: I had to choose. I preferred the entreaty to the command, and this preference resulted in my losing my place.* I next went into the service of an old artist, who out of

* In the eleventh chapter of the tenth book of *Gil Blas*, Scipio relates how he entered the service of a rich cloth merchant, Balthazar Velasquez, who also wished him to play the spy on his rakish son, but how he preferred to assist the latter in deceiving his father, until the son proposed to aid him in killing the old man.

friendship wanted to teach me the principles of his art; but whilst he was shewing me what they were, he let me die of hunger. That disgusted me with painting, and with my dwelling in Palencia. I came to Valladolid, where, by the greatest good fortune, I entered the house of a governor of the hospital; I am living there still, and am delighted with my post. Señor Manuel Ordoñez, my master, is a man of profound piety, a good man, for he always walks with his eyes fixed on the ground, and a big rosary in his hand. They say that from his youth, having no other aim but the good of the poor, he has devoted himself to it with unwearying zeal, and his care has not been without its reward. Everything has prospered with him, and by the blessing of Heaven, whilst he manages the affairs of the poor, he has become rich!"

After Fabricio had made this speech I said to him, "I am very glad you are satisfied with your lot; but between ourselves, it seems to me you might play a better part in the world than that of a servant: a fellow of your worth might take a higher flight." "You speak without thinking, Gil Blas," he replied. "Know that, for a man of my mood, there is no more agreeable situation than mine. The duties of a servant are troublesome, I admit, to a silly fellow, but for a lad of intelligence they are highly attractive: a

superior genius who goes into service does not do his duties in a rough way like a simpleton. He enters a house to rule rather than to serve. He begins by studying his master; he accommodates himself to his faults, gains his confidence, and then leads him by the nose. Such has been my plan of operation with my hospital governor. I soon read the man; I saw he wanted to pass for a saint; I pretended to be his dupe—that costs nothing. I did more, I copied him; and acting in his presence the same part which he acts before others, I tricked the trickster, and gradually became his factotum. Some day, I hope under his auspices to have something to do with the affairs of the poor. I too may chance to make a fortune, for I am as fond of their interests as he is.”

“These are fine hopes, my dear Fabricio,” I replied, “and I congratulate you. For my part, I come back to my first plan. I shall change my embroidered suit for a cassock, repair to Salamanca, and there, enlisting myself under the banners of the University, become a tutor.” “A capital idea,” cried Fabricio; “a pleasant conceit! What madness at your age to want to be a pedant. Do you know, you poor fellow, what you are committing yourself to by adopting this decision? As soon as you obtain a tutor’s place, the entire household will have their eyes upon you. Your most trivial actions will be scrupulously

watched. You will have constantly to restrain yourself, to wear a hypocrite's face and to seem endowed with all the virtues. You will never have a moment for pleasure. An everlasting censor of your pupil, you will pass your days in teaching him Latin, and in scolding him when he says or does anything against decorum; a task which will give you no small amount of occupation. And after all your trouble and constraint, what will be the fruit of your pains? If the little gentleman is a bad boy, they will say that you have brought him up ill; and his parents will send you packing without any reward, perhaps even without paying you your salary. Do not talk to me of a tutor's place; it is on a par with a cure of souls. But give me a servant's post; it is a sinecure, and pledges you to nothing. If a master has vices, the superior genius who serves him flatters them, and often, indeed, converts them to his own advantage. A servant lives without anxiety in a good household. After having eaten and drunk his fill, he goes to sleep quietly, like a child of well-to-do parents, without troubling himself about the butcher or baker. I should never end, my dear fellow," he continued, "were I to enumerate all the advantages of being a servant. Trust me, Gil Blas; give up once for all the desire of becoming a tutor, and follow my example."

"Ay, but, Fabricio," I rejoined, "one does not

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meet with hospital governors every day; and if I were resolved to go into service, I should at all events like to get a good place."

"Oh, you are right," he said, "and I shall make that my business. I guarantee you a good situation, if it were only to rescue a fine fellow from the university."

The impending destitution which threatened me, and the confident bearing of Fabricio persuading me even more than his arguments, I resolved to go into service. Then we quitted the inn, and my townsman said to me: "I am going to take you forthwith to a man to whom most servants apply when out of a place. He has scouts who tell him all that goes on in families. He knows where servants are wanted, and keeps a correct register, not only of vacant places, but also of the good and bad qualities of the masters. The man has been a friar in some convent or other. In fact it was he who got me my own place."

Whilst we were conversing about this singular agency the son of Nunez the barber took me down a blind alley. We entered a small house, where we found a man of about fifty writing at a table. We saluted him, with tolerable respect, too; but whether he was proud by nature, or whether, accustomed only to see lackeys and coachmen, he had got into the habit of receiving his clients without much ceremony, he did not rise from his seat, but

contented himself with giving us a slight nod. However, he looked at me with special attention. I saw clearly that he was surprised at a young man in an embroidered velvet suit wanting to become a servant. He might rather have thought that I was come to ask for one. But he could not long continue in suspense concerning my intention, since Fabricio at once said to him: "Señor Arias de Londona,* give me leave to present to you my best friend. He is a young man of good family, whom misfortune reduces to the necessity of going into service. I beg you will provide him with a good place, and you may rely on his gratitude."

"Gentlemen," Arias coolly replied, "this is the way with you all. Before you are placed you make the finest promises in the world; as soon as you are in a good situation you think no more of them."

"What?" said Fabricio, "do you complain of me? Did I not do what was right?"

"You might have done better still," rejoined Arias; "your position is as good as a clerk's in a public office, and you paid me as if I had put you with an author." Then I took up the conversation, and said to Mr Arias that, to show him that I was not ungrateful, I should like the acknowledgment to precede the service.

* Llorente says this *señor* ought to be called Londono, for there are two villages of this name near the town of Ordoná, in Biscay.

At the same time I took out two ducats and gave them to him, promising to give him more if he got me a good situation.

He seemed satisfied with my mode of dealing. "I like men to act so with me," he said. "There are some excellent places vacant; I will give you a list of them, and you can choose the one which pleases you." With these words he put on his spectacles, opened a register which was on the table, turned over a few leaves, and began to read as follows: "Wanted, a footman for Captain Torbellino,* a passionate, coarse, and whimsical man; he scolds without intermission, swears, beats his servants, and usually cripples them." "Let us get on to another," I said, in the midst of this description; "that captain does not suit me." My vivacity made Arias smile, and he thus continued his reading: "Donna Manuela de Sandoval, a superannuated old dowager, peevish and capricious, is now without a footman; she keeps but one, and cannot retain that one for a whole day. For the last ten years there has been but one livery suit in the house, which is worn by all the footmen who enter, whatever their size may be. It may be said that they only try it on, and that it is still quite new, though it has been worn by two thousand. Doctor Alvar Fanez wants a footman. He is a chemist and

* *Torbellino* is the Spanish for a whirlwind, as well as for a biosterous person.

physician. He keeps his servants well, treats them properly, and gives them high wages ; but he tries experiments on them. There are often places vacant in his house." " Ah, I can readily imagine it," said Fabricio, laughing. "Od's life, you are showing us fine places." "Patience," said Arias de Londona, "we are not yet at the end ; there will be something to please you." Thereupon he continued to read : " Donna Alphonsa de Solis, an aged devotee, who spends two-thirds of the day at church, and insists upon her footman being always along with her, has been without a lackey these three weeks. The licentiate Sedillo,* an old canon of the chapter of this city, packed off his servant yesterday . . . " " Stop there, Señor Arias de Londona," cried Fabricio ; " we will fix upon that last place. The licentiate Sedillo is one of my master's friends, and I am very well acquainted with him. I know he has for his housekeeper an old devotee, Dame Jacinta, who manages all his affairs. It is one of the best houses in Valladolid : they live quietly, and eat and drink very well. Besides, the canon is an infirm man, old and gouty, who will soon make his will, so that a legacy may be expected. What a delightful prospect for a servant ! Gil Blas," he added, turning to me. " Let us lose no time, my friend, but go

* This should be Cedillo, according to Llorente.

instantly to the licentiate's house; I shall introduce you myself, and give you a character." At these words, for fear of losing such a good chance, we hurriedly took leave of Mr Arias, who assured me that if I should not get this place, I might reckon, in return for my money, on his finding me another as good.

BOOK II.



CHAPTER I.

FABRICIO INTRODUCES GIL BLAS, TO THE
LICENTATE SEDILLO. HOW THEY FOUND
THAT CANON. A DESCRIPTION OF HIS
HOUSEKEEPER.

WE were so afraid of arriving too late at the old licentiate's that we rushed from the alley to his house. We found the door closed, and we knocked. A child of ten, whom the housekeeper passed off as a niece,—and scandal could not gainsay the relationship,—opened the door, and as we were asking her if we could speak to the canon, Dame Jacinta appeared. She was a lady already arrived at years of discretion, but still handsome: and I especially admired the freshness of her complexion. She wore a long woollen dress of the most ordinary quality, with a broad leather girdle, from which hung on one side a bunch of keys, and on the other a rosary of large beads. As soon as we saw her we bowed with much respect; she returned the salute very civilly, but modestly and with downcast eyes.

"I have been told," said my companion, "that the licentiate Sedillo requires an honest

servant, and I have come to introduce one with whom I hope he will be pleased." The housekeeper raised her eyes at these words, and looked at me steadily, and, unable to reconcile my embroidered suit with Fabricio's speech, asked if it were I who wanted the vacant place.

"Yes," said Nunez's son, "this is the young man. You are surprised at his appearance, but he has met with misfortunes which oblige him to go into service. He will be consoled for his troubles," he added, in an insinuating voice, "if he is happy enough to become an inmate here, and dwell with the virtuous Jacinta, who deserves to be the housekeeper of the Patriarch of the Indies."* At these words the old devotee ceased to look at me, and cast her eyes on the courteous individual who was speaking to her. Struck with his features, which she thought were not altogether unknown to her, she said, "I have a vague idea of having seen you somewhere; pray, assist my recollection."

"Virtuous Jacinta," replied Fabricio, "I am proud to have attracted your notice; I have been twice to this house with my master, Señor Manuel Ordoñez, the governor of the hospital."

"Ah, just so!" replied the housekeeper. "I recollect; I recall you now. Ah, since you belong to Señor Ordoñez, you must be a good

* The Patriarch of the Indies was the head of all the religious establishments of the Spaniards of South America.

and honourable lad. Your situation speaks in your favour, and this young man could not have a better recommendation. Come in," she continued, "I will get you speech with Señor Sedillo. I think he will be glad to engage a lad at your recommendation."

We followed Dame Jacinta. The canon had four apartments on the ground floor, well wainscotted, and all leading into one another. She begged us to wait in the first one for a moment, and left us, passing into the second, where the licentiate was. After remaining there some time alone with him to introduce the matter, she came and told us we might enter. We perceived the gouty old man, immersed in an arm-chair, a pillow under his head, cushions under his arms, and his legs resting on a large cushion stuffed with down. We approached him without stinting our bows; and Fabricio, being still spokesman, was not merely satisfied with repeating what he had said to the housekeeper, but began to extol my merits, and enlarged especially on the honours I had reaped at Dr Godinez's in philosophical discussions: as though I required to be a great philosopher to become a canon's footman! However, by the grand eulogy he pronounced on me, he did not fail to throw dust in the licentiate's eyes, who observing besides that I was not displeasing to Dame Jacinta, said to my introducer: "Friend, I take the youth

whom you have brought to me into my service; I like him well enough, and I opine favourably of his morals, since he is presented by a servant of Señor Ordoñez."

As soon as Fabricio saw that I was engaged, he made a low bow to the canon and another still lower to the housekeeper, and went away well pleased, after telling me in an undertone that we should see each other again, and that I had nothing to do but to stay where I was. When he was gone, the licentiate asked me my name, and why I had left my native place; and by his questions he drew me on, in the presence of Dame Jacinta, to relate my history. I diverted them both, especially by the narrative of my last adventure. Camilla and Don Raphael amused them so much that it nearly cost the gouty old man his life; for whilst he was laughing heartily he was seized with such a violent fit of coughing that I thought he was going to die. As he had not yet made his will, you may fancy how frightened the housekeeper was! I saw her trembling in despair, rushing to the old man's assistance, and doing all that one is wont to do to relieve a coughing child, rubbing his forehead and clapping him on the back. However, it was but a false alarm; the old man ceased to cough, and his housekeeper to torment him. I was going to finish my story, but Dame Jacinta, fearing a second cough, would not let me. She took me from the canon's room

to a wardrobe, where amongst several other suits was that of my predecessor. She bade me take it and put mine in its place, which I was not sorry to do, as I wished to preserve my suit in the hope that it might still be of use to me. Then we both went to get dinner ready.

I was no novice in the art of cooking. In fact I had served my happy apprenticeship under Dame Leonarda, who might have passed for a good cook. Yet she was not to be compared to Dame Jacinta. The latter, I should say, was even better than the cook of the Archbishop of Toledo.* She excelled in everything; her soups were exquisite, so skilled was she in selecting and mixing the gravies she put into them; and her made dishes were seasoned delightfully. When dinner was ready we again entered the canon's room, and, whilst I laid the cloth on the table close to his arm-chair, the housekeeper tucked a napkin under the old man's chin, and pinned it behind his back. A moment later I brought in a soup which might have been placed before the most famous *gourmand* in Madrid, and two *entrées* which might have stimulated the appetite of a viceroy, if Dame Jacinta had not been sparing of the spices, for fear of irritating the licentiate's gout. At the sight of these dainty dishes my old master, whom I thought impotent in all his limbs, showed me

* As the Archbishopric of Toledo was one of the richest in Spain, Gil Blas thinks that the cook of this prelate ought to be first-rate.

that he had not entirely lost the use of his arms. He employed them to get rid of his pillow and his cushions, and cheerfully prepared himself for eating. Though his hand shook it did not refuse him its aid; he moved it about pretty freely, yet in such a way as to spill on the cloth and on his napkin half of what he lifted to his mouth. I carried away the soup when he had done with it, and brought in a partridge flanked by two roast quails, which Dame Jacinta carved for him. She took care also to give him from time to time copious draughts of wine, slightly diluted, from a large and deep silver cup, which she held to his mouth as if he had been a fifteen months old child. When he was well gorged, the devotee untied his napkin, put back his pillow and cushions, and left him quietly to enjoy the usual after-dinner nap, whilst we cleared away the things, and went to eat in our turn.

This is how our canon dined every day; he was, perhaps, the best knife and fork in the chapter. But he supped more lightly, contenting himself with a chicken or a rabbit, and a few preserves. I fed well in that house, and I lived there a very easy life. There was but one thing to annoy me, and that was that I had to sit up with my master, and spend the night like a sick nurse. In addition to a stricture which made him call for something or other about ten times in an hour, he was very much given to perspire; and

when that came on his shirt had to be changed. "Gil Blas," he said to me the second night, "you are skilful and active; I foresee that I shall be well pleased with your attendance. I only recommend you to behave respectfully towards Dame Jacinta, and to do implicitly whatever she tells you, as though I were ordering you myself. She is a woman who has served me with particular zeal for these fifteen years; she takes such care of me as I can never be sufficiently grateful for. And so, I confess, she is dearer to me than all my family. To please her I have turned out of doors my nephew, my own sister's son; and I did right. He had no consideration for this poor woman; and far from doing justice to her sincere attachment to me, the insolent fellow treated her as a hypocrite; for now-a-days virtue is taken for mere hypocrisy by young people. Thank Heaven I have got rid of that rascal. I prefer attachment to my person to the ties of blood, and am influenced only by the benefits I receive." "You are right, sir," I said to the licentiate; "gratitude should have more weight with us than the ties of kindred." "Of course," he replied, "and my will shall show that I do not care much for my relatives. My housekeeper will stand well in it, and you shall not be forgotten, if you go on serving me as well as you have begun. The servant whom I turned away yesterday lost a good legacy by his own fault.

If the wretch had not by his misbehaviour compelled me to pack him off, I should have made him rich; but he was a conceited fellow, who had not sufficient respect for Dame Jacinta, an idle rogue who dreaded the smallest trouble. He did not like to sit up with me, and it fatigued him greatly to pass his nights in relieving me." "Oh the wretch!" I cried, as though inspired by the genius of Fabricio, "he did not deserve to be living with such a good master. A lad who has the happiness to serve you ought to be indefatigable in his zeal; he should consider his duty a pleasure, and think nothing of even going through fire and water for you."

I perceived that these words greatly pleased the licentiate. He was no less satisfied with my assurance that I should always be thoroughly submissive to Dame Jacinta; so, wishing to have the character of a servant whom fatigue could not overcome, I performed my duty with the best grace possible. I did not complain of being on my feet all night, though I found it very unpleasant; and without the legacy wherewith I fed my hopes, I should soon have been disgusted with my situation, and not have been able to stand it. It is true that I got a few hours rest during the day. The housekeeper, I will do her this justice, was very kind to me, which must be attributed to the pains I took to secure her good graces by a subservient and respectful bearing. If I was

at table with her and her niece, who was called Inesilla, I changed their plates, filled their glasses, and waited on them with a most particular attention. Thus I wormed myself into their friendship. One day when Dame Jacinta had gone to market, finding myself alone with Inesilla I entered into conversation with her. I asked her if her father and mother were still alive. "Oh, no," she answered; "they are dead long, long ago; my good aunt told me so, and I never saw them." I religiously believed the little girl, though her answer was not categorical; and I got her to talk so freely that she told me more than I wanted to know. She informed me, or rather I gathered from her artlessness, that her good aunt had a male friend living likewise at an old canon's, whose affairs he managed, and that these happy domestics intended to put together the spoils of their masters in a union, the sweets whereof they had tasted beforehand. I have already said that Dame Jacinta, though somewhat advanced in years, was still fresh looking. It is true that she spared no pains for keeping herself so: she not only took an enema every morning, but swallowed some first-rate soup during the day and when she went to bed. Moreover, she slept soundly at night, whilst I sat up with my master. But what perhaps contributed more than anything else to preserve her fresh complexion was, as Inesilla told me, that she had an issue on each leg.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE CANON WAS TREATED WHEN HE FELL
ILL; WHAT CAME OF IT; AND WHAT HE LEFT
IN HIS WILL TO GIL BLAS.

I SERVED the licentiate Sedillo for three months, without grumbling at the bad nights he made me pass. At the end of this time he fell ill; fever came on, and this distemper aggravated his gout. For the first time in his life, which had been a long one, he had recourse to physicians. He sent for Doctor Sangrado,* whom all Valladolid regarded as a Hippocrates. Dame Jacinta would have preferred that the canon should have begun by making his will, and even dropped some hints on that subject, but he did not believe himself as yet so near his end, and was obstinate in certain matters. I therefore went for Doctor Sangrado, and brought him to the house. He was a tall man, spare and pale,

* *Sangrado* is the Spanish for "bled"; the person who bleeds is called *Sangrador*. In the *Voyages faits en Espagne . . . et ailleurs*, 1699, the people who bleed are called *Sangreros*, and they do nothing else but blood-letting. It has been said that in Sangrado Lesage wanted to depict the celebrated Dutch physician Helvetius, who practised in Paris, and was the father of the well-known philosopher. It is more probable that a certain Doctor Hecquet, the dean of the faculty of medicine of Paris, was meant; for he never drank anything but water, and never ate any meat.

who for forty years at least had kept Clotho* busy with her shears. This learned physician had a grave appearance; he weighed his words and emphasized his expressions. His arguments appeared to be mathematical, and his opinions very original.

After having examined the symptoms of my master's disease he said to him pompously: "The question is to supply the defect of perspiration which is obstructed. Others in my place would doubtless prescribe saline draughts, diuretics, diaphoretics, which for the most part comprise sulphur and mercury; but purgatives and sudorifics are pernicious drugs, invented by quacks. All chemical preparations seem made only to injure. I use simpler and more efficacious means. What is your usual diet?" he continued. The canon replied: "I generally take soups and rich meats."

"Soups and rich meats!" cried the doctor in surprise. "Ah! truly I am no longer astonished to find you ill. Luxurious living is a poisonous bait; a snare that sensuality sets for mankind, the more effectually to ruin them. You must renounce pampering your appetite; the most insipid food is the best for health. As the blood is insipid it requires food which

* In the original it is said that Sangrado kept the shears of the Parcae occupied. This is a mistake, for only Clotho cut the thread of life, whilst Lachesis and Atropos spun. In Smollett's translation this fault had already been corrected.

partakes of its own nature. And do you drink wine?" he added. "Yes," said the canon, "diluted with water." "Oh, no matter how you dilute it," replied the physician. "What an irregularity! This is a frightful diet! You ought to have been dead long ago. How old are you?" "I am entering on my sixty-ninth year," replied the canon. "Just so," said the physician, "a premature old age is always the result of intemperance. If you had only drunk pure water all your life, and had been content with simple food, baked apples for instance, peas or beans, you would now not be tormented by the gout, and all your limbs would have readily discharged their functions. Yet I do not despair of setting you on your feet again, if only you will strictly follow my directions." The licentiate, epicure as he was, promised to obey the doctor in all things.

Sangrado then sent me for a surgeon whom he named, and ordered him to take from my master about eighteen ounces of blood, by way of beginning to supply the defect of perspiration. Then he said to the surgeon: "Master Martin Onez, come back in three hours, and do the like again; and to-morrow you shall make a fresh start. It is a mistake to think that the blood is necessary to preserve life; you cannot bleed a patient too much. As he is not compelled to perform any considerable movement or exercise, and has nothing to do except not to die, he

needs no more blood to live than a man who is asleep : life in both cases consists only in pulsation and respiration." The good canon, imagining that so great a doctor could not argue wrongly, allowed himself to be bled without resistance. When the physician had ordered these frequent and copious bleedings, he said that we must also make the canon continually drink warm water, declaring that water drunk abundantly might be considered the true specific against all sorts of distempers. Then he went away, telling Dame Jacinta and me, with an air of confidence, that he would answer for the patient's life if we treated him in the manner he had prescribed. The housekeeper, who probably had a different idea from his own about his method, protested that his orders should be scrupulously observed. In fact, we put on the water to warm immediately; and as the physician had recommended us above all things not to be too sparing of it, we at once made my master drink two or three pints at as many draughts. An hour later we repeated it ; then, returning to the charge, from time to time, we poured a deluge of water into his stomach. The surgeon, on the other hand, seconding our efforts by the quantity of blood which he drew off, we brought the old canon to death's door in less than a couple of days.

The good priest, being quite exhausted, said to me in a feeble voice as I was going to make

him swallow another big glass of the specific : “ Stop, Gil Blas, give me no more, my friend. I see plainly that I must die, in spite of the virtue of the water ; and though I have hardly a drop of blood left in my body I do not feel myself the better for that : which plainly proves that the cleverest physician in the world cannot prolong our days when their fatal period has arrived. So I must prepare to set out for the other world : go therefore and fetch me a notary, I want to make my will.” At these last words, which I was not sorry to hear, I pretended to look very sad, which no legatee fails to do in a similar circumstance ; and concealing the desire I had to execute the commission which he gave me, I said to him : “ Oh, sir, you are not so bad, thank God, but that you may recover.” “ No, no, my lad,” he replied, “ it is all over with me ; I feel that the gout is rising, and that death is at hand ; make haste to go where I have told you.” In fact I saw that he was changing visibly ; and the matter appeared to me so pressing that I made as much haste as possible to obey his order, leaving him to the care of Dame Jacinta, who was more afraid than I that he would die without making his will. I went into the first notary’s house which was pointed out to me, and finding him at home, said to him : Sir, the licentiate Sedillo, my master, is nearing his end ; he wants to make his will ; there is not a moment to lose.” The notary was a dapper, little, old man, who was

fond of jesting. He asked me what physician attended the canon. I said it was Doctor Sangrado. On hearing that name he caught up his cloak and hat in a hurry, and cried :* “ By Heavens, let us make haste, for that doctor is so expeditious that he does not give his patients time to call members of my fraternity. That man has done me out of many wills.”

Whilst saying these words he made haste to come with me ; and as we were both walking quickly, to arrive before the canon should be at the last gasp, I said to him : “ Sir, you are aware that a testator when he is dying often lacks memory ; if perchance my master should forget me, I beg you to remind him of my zeal.’ “ That I will, my good fellow,” replied the notary, “ you may depend on that. It is right that a master should reward an attendant who has served him well. I will even urge him to give you something handsome, if he be in the least inclined to recognise your services.” The licentiate, when we came into his room, had still all his faculties about him. Dame Jacinta, her face bathed in tears which she had at command, was at his bedside. She had just been playing her part, and preparing the good man to benefit her largely. We left the notary alone with my master, and went out, she and I,

* That a notary who is going out in a hurry takes his hat and cloak, denotes, according to M. Llorente, “an intimate knowledge of Spanish habits which none but a Spaniard could possess.”

into the ante-chamber, where we met the surgeon, whom the physician had sent to bleed the canon anew and for the last time. We laid hold of him. "Stop, Master Martin," said the housekeeper; "you cannot just now enter the chamber of Señor Sedillo. He is about to dictate his last will to a notary who is with him; you can bleed him at your leisure when his will is made."

The pious gentlewoman and I were much afraid that the licentiate should die in the midst of making his will; but fortunately the deed which caused us this anxiety was executed. We saw the notary leave, who meeting me on his way, said smiling; "Gil Blas has not been forgotten." At these words I felt the most lively joy imaginable; and I was so grateful to my master for remembering me that I promised to pray heartily for him after his death. This event happened anon; for, the surgeon having bled him once more, the poor old man, already too much weakened, expired almost immediately. As he was drawing his last breath the physician appeared, and looked rather foolish in spite of the custom he had of dispatching his patients. Nevertheless, far from setting down the death of the canon to the drenchings and bleedings, he coolly observed as he took his departure that the patient had not been bled enough, and had not drunk enough warm water. The medical executioner, I

mean the surgeon, also seeing that there was no further need of his services, followed Doctor Sangrado, both remarking that they had said that the licentiate would not recover, the very first day they saw him. And in fact they hardly ever were mistaken when they passed the like judgment.

As soon as we saw that our patron was dead, Dame Jacinta, Inesilla, and I joined in a chorus of funeral lamentations, which were heard all over the neighbourhood. The housekeeper in particular, who had the greatest reason to rejoice, uttered such plaintive sounds that she seemed to be the person most seriously afflicted. The room instantly filled with people, attracted less by sympathy than by curiosity. The relatives of the deceased no sooner heard of his death than they poured into the house, and had seals put on everything. They found the housekeeper in such grief that they thought at first the canon had made no will; but they soon learned, to their great regret, that there was one, executed with all the necessary formalities. When it came to be opened, and they saw that the testator had disposed of the best part of his property in favour of Dame Jacinta and the little girl, they pronounced his funeral oration in terms not much to the honour of his memory. They objurgated the legatee, and also dragged in my name. It must be confessed that I deserved it well.

'The licentiate—Heaven rest his soul!—in order to make me remember him all my life, expressed himself in these terms in one clause of his will: "Likewise, whereas Gil Blas is a youth who has already some knowledge of literature, to render him a thorough scholar, I bequeath to him my library, all my books and manuscripts, without any exception."

I did not know where this said library could be; I had not observed one in the house. I only knew that there were a few papers, with five or six volumes, on two little deal shelves in my master's study: and that was my legacy. Moreover, the books could not do me much good. The title of one was *The Complete Cook*; another treated of indigestion and how to cure it; and the rest were the four parts of a breviary, half eaten by the worms. As for the manuscripts, the most curious consisted of all the documents of a lawsuit in which the canon was formerly engaged, for his prebend. After examining my legacy with more attention than it deserved, I gave it up to the relatives who had so greatly grudged it to me. I even made over to them the livery I wore, and resumed my own dress, claiming my wages for my only reward. Then I went to look for another place. As for Dame Jacinta, besides the sums which had been left to her, she had in addition some valuable articles, which she had appropriated with the aid of her friend during the licentiate's illness.

CHAPTER III.

GIL BLAS ENTERS THE SERVICE OF DOCTOR SANGRADO, AND BECOMES A CELEBRATED PHYSICIAN.

I RESOLVED to go and see Señor Arias de Londona, and to select from his register a new situation; but just as I was entering the alley where he lived I met Doctor Sangrado, whom I had not seen since the day of my master's death. I took the liberty of touching my hat to him. He recollected me at once, though I had changed my dress; and with a show of pleasure in seeing me, said: "Ah, there you are, my lad; I was just thinking of you. I want some clever fellow to enter my service, and I thought you would just suit, if you know how to read and write." "Sir," I replied, "in that respect I am your man, for I can do both." "In that case," he replied, "you are the very lad I want. Come to my house, which you will find very comfortable; I will treat you out of the common. I shall give you no wages, but you will want nothing; I shall take care to use you well, and teach you the great art of curing all diseases. In a word, you will be rather my pupil than my servant."

I accepted the doctor's proposal, in the hope that, under such a learned master, I might become illustrious in medicine. He took me

home with him at once, to instal me in the occupation he destined me for ; which occupation consisted in writing down the names and residences of the patients who sent for him whilst he was out. He had a register at his place for this purpose, wherein an old female servant, who was his only attendant, used to enter the addresses ; but not only was she unable to spell, but she wrote so badly that, as a rule, her writing could not be deciphered. The doctor gave me the charge of this book, which might justly be called a register of deaths, as almost all the people died whose names I took down. I inserted, so to speak, the names of those who wished to go to the other world, just as a clerk in a stage-coach office enters the names of those who engage places. My pen was always in my hand, for there was at that time no more fashionable physician in Valladolid than Doctor Sangrado. He had risen into reputation with the public by his professional verbiage, which he gave out with an imposing air, and by a few lucky cures which had done him more credit than he deserved.

He had no lack of practice, nor, consequently, of wealth. However, he did not fare the better for that, and the living at his house was very frugal. As a rule we ate only peas, beans, baked apples, or cheese. He explained that this food suited the stomach best, as being most fit for trituration, that is, for easy pounding.

Nevertheless, though he thought them readily digestible, he did not recommend that people should take their fill of them; wherein, of a truth, he was in the right. But if he forbade the maid-servant and myself to eat much, to make up for it he allowed us to drink as much water as we liked. Far from restricting us in this respect he used sometimes to say to us: "Drink, my children; health consists in the suppleness and humectation of the parts. Drink water in abundance; it is a universal solvent; water melts all the salts. If the flow of blood is a little sluggish, water accelerates its motion; if too rapid, water checks its impetuosity." Our doctor was so far consistent that he himself never drank anything but water, though he was advanced in years. He defined old age as a natural consumption, which dries up and wastes us away; and, in accordance with this definition, he deplored the ignorance of those who call wine old men's milk. He maintained that wine wears them out and destroys them, and pleaded very eloquently that this fatal liquor is for them, as for everyone, a treacherous friend and a deceitful pleasure.

In spite of these learned arguments, after I had been eight days in the house I suffered from diarrhœa, and began to feel great pain in the stomach, which I was rash enough to set down to the universal solvent, and to the wretched nourishment that I took. I complained of it

to my master, in hopes that he might relent, and allow me a little wine at my meals; but he was too inimical to this liquor to agree to it. "When you shall have acquired a habit of drinking water," he said, "you will acknowledge its excellence; but if you feel any reluctance for pure water, there are innocent means of supporting the stomach against the insipidity of aqueous drinks. Sage, for instance, and veronica, will give them a delectable savour; and if you would make them still more delicious, you have only to add an infusion of carnation, of rosemary, or of the wild poppy."

It was no use his praising water, and teaching me how to brew exquisite beverages; I drank with so much moderation that perceiving my temperance he said to me: "Ah, Gil Blas, of a truth I do not wonder that you do not enjoy perfect health; you do not drink enough, my friend. Water taken in small quantities serves only to develope the particles of bile and to give them more activity; whereas they should be drowned in copious dilutions. Do not be afraid, my child, that a superabundance of water will weaken or chill your stomach; dismiss that panic fear that you seem to be in of frequent drinking. I will guarantee the consequences; and if you do not think my word good enough, Celsus himself will bear me out. This Latin oracle writes an admirable eulogy of water; and he goes on to say, in so many words, that

those who make the weakness of their stomach an excuse for drinking wine do a manifest injustice to this organ, and merely seek a cloak for their sensuality."

As it would have looked bad to appear untractable at the very beginning of my medical career, I pretended to be convinced that he was right; and I will even confess that I actually believed him. I therefore continued to drink water, on the authority of Celsus; or rather, I began to drown my bile by drinking this liquid copiously; and although I felt worse and worse every day, the foregone conclusion was stronger than experience. I had, it will be seen, a natural inclination for the medical profession. Yet I could not always resist the violence of my pains, which grew to such a pitch that at last I resolved to leave Doctor Sangrado. But he gave me a new occupation which made me change my mind. "Hark ye," he said to me one day, "I am not one of those harsh and ungrateful masters who let their servants grow gray in their service before rewarding them. I am pleased with you, I like you; and without waiting for you to serve me longer I have resolved to make your fortune from to-day. I will forthwith reveal to you the whole of the healing art which I have been professing for so many years. Other physicians make this consist in the knowledge of a thousand difficult sciences; but I, for my part, mean

to shorten this long road, and spare you the pains of studying natural philosophy, pharmacy, botany, and anatomy. Know, my friend, that you have nothing to do but to bleed and make your patients drink warm water :* that is the secret of curing all the diseases in the world. Yes, this simple secret which I reveal to you, and which nature, impenetrable to my brethren, has not been able to conceal from my observation, lies in these two things—in blood-letting and frequent draughts of water. I have nothing more to teach you. You know physic thoroughly ; and profiting by the result of my long experience, you are all at once as learned as I am. You can,” he continued, “relieve me forthwith. You can keep our register in the morning, and in the afternoon visit some of my patients. Whilst I look after the nobility and the clergy, you shall go for me to the houses of the middle class when they send for me ; and when you have practised some time I will procure your regular admittance into the faculty. You are now, Gil Blas, proficient before you become a physician, whilst others are physicians a long time, and most of them all their lives, before they become proficient.”

I thanked the doctor for having so quickly enabled me to act as his deputy ; and to show

* In the *Voyages faits en Espagne . . . et ailleurs*, 1699, it is stated that *le potage et la saignée . . . sont les lieux communs des médecins*.

my gratitude for his kindness, I assured him that I would adhere to his views all my life, even if they were contrary to those of Hippocrates. Nevertheless, this assurance was not quite sincere. I disapproved of his views concerning water, and reckoned on drinking wine every day when I went out to visit my patients. For the second time I hung my embroidered suit on the nail, in order to assume one of my master's, and to give myself the appearance of a physician.¹ I then set about practising medicine at the expense of those whom it might concern. My first patient was an alguazil who had an attack of pleurisy. I ordered him to be bled unmercifully, and to give him plenty of water. I next went to a pastry-cook who roared aloud on account of the gout. I drew off his blood as freely as the alguazil's, and ordered him to drink water every instant. I received a dozen reals for my prescriptions, which made me take such a fancy to the profession, that I thought "the more mischief, the better sport." As I was leaving the pastry-cook's house I met Fabricio, whom I had not seen since the death of the licentiate Sedillo. He looked at me a long time with surprise; then he burst out laughing with all his might, holding his sides. It was not without reason. I wore a cloak which trailed

¹ Physicians formerly wore a distinctive dress in France as well as in Spain.

on the ground, with a doublet and breeches four times longer and wider than need be. I looked, indeed, a grotesque and original figure. I let him laugh as long as he liked, not without being tempted to follow his example; but I refrained, that I might preserve my decorum in the streets, the better to enact the physician, who is not a laughing animal. If my ridiculous appearance excited Fabricio's merriment, my serious air increased it; and when he ceased laughing, he exclaimed: "Od's life, Gil Blas, why, you are nicely tricked out! Who the deuce has disguised you in that fashion?" "Gently, my friend, gently," I replied; "respect a new Hippocrates! Learn that I am the deputy of Dr Sangrado, the most famous physician in Valladolid. I have been living in his house for three weeks. He has fully instructed me in medicine; and as he cannot personally attend to all the patients who send for him, I visit part of them to relieve him. He goes to the houses of the great, and I to those of the commoners." "Capital," said Fabricio; "that is, he gives up the blood of the people to you, and keeps for himself that of the quality. I congratulate you on your division; it is better to have to do with the people than with persons of fashion. Happy is the lot of a physician of the suburbs! His faults are less in view, and his assassinations make no noise. Yes, my dear

fellow," he added, "your lot seems to me an enviable one; and, to talk like Alexander, if I were not Fabricio, I should wish to be Gil Blas."

To convince the son of Nunez, the barber, that he was not wrong in extolling my present good fortune, I showed him the reals of the alguazil and the pastry-cook; and then we adjourned to a tavern to spend some of them. They brought us some tolerable wine, and the desire I had to taste it made me think it better than it was. I drank some deep draughts; and, with due deference to the Latin oracle, the more I poured into my stomach the more I felt that that organ was not displeased at the wrong I did it. Fabricio and I stayed long in this tavern, and made merry at the expense of our masters, as 'is the custom with servants. Then, seeing that night was approaching, we separated, after promising each other to meet again at the same place, on the next day, in the afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

GIL BLAS CONTINUES TO PRACTISE MEDICINE WITH
AS MUCH SUCCESS AS ABILITY. THE ADVEN-
TURE OF THE RECOVERY OF THE RING.

I WAS scarcely home when Dr Sangrado arrived. I gave him an account of the patients I had seen, and put in his hands eight reals which remained of the twelve I had received for my prescriptions. "Eight reals," he said, counting them; "it is little enough for two visits, but we must take all we can get. And he took them almost all, for he kept six, and gave me the other two, whilst saying: "Here, Gil Blas, here is the beginning of a fortune for you; moreover, I will make an agreement with you, which will be very useful; I shall allow you a fourth part of what you bring me. You will soon be rich, my friend; for, please God, there will be plenty of sickness this year."

I had reason to be satisfied with my share, for, as I intended always to keep a quarter of what I received in the town, and as I got, moreover, a quarter of what remained, this, if there is any truth in arithmetic, made, as my perquisite, nearly half of the sum total. This inspired me with a new ardour for my profession. On the next day, as soon as I had dined, I put on my professional dress, and took the field once more. I visited several patients who were on my list, and treated them all in the same

manner, though they had various disorders. So far, things had gone on smoothly, and no one, thank Heaven, had rebelled against my prescriptions; but however excellent the practice of a physician may be, he cannot always escape censure or envy. I went to the house of a grocer, whose son suffered from dropsy. I met there a little, swarthy physician, whose name was Dr Cuchillo,¹ and whom a relative of the master of the house had just brought in to see the patient. I made the most profound bows all round, but especially to the gentleman whom I thought they had called in to have a consultation with me about the patient's case. He gravely returned my salute; then, after looking at me some time attentively, he said: "Doctor, I beg pardon for being inquisitive. I thought I knew all the physicians in Valladolid, my colleagues; and yet I confess that your features are unknown to me. You must have been settled but a short time in this town." I replied that I was a young practitioner, and that I was as yet only prescribing under the auspices of Dr Sangrado. "I congratulate you," he replied politely, "on having embraced the method of so great a man. I do not doubt that you are very skilful, though

¹ *Cuchillo* is the Spanish for a knife, and means also "to command imperiously." The portrait of Dr Cuchillo is said to be an allusion to a certain Dr Procope-Couteau (1684-1753), a man of small stature, and eccentric habits, who practised in Paris, was a declared opponent of Dr Hecquet, and wrote several plays, as well as various articles in newspapers.

you seem very young." He said this so naturally that I did not know whether he spoke seriously, or whether he was joking at my expense; and I was thinking of what I ought to reply to him when the grocer, taking the opportunity of addressing us, said: "Gentlemen, I am persuaded that you both are perfectly competent in medical science; pray examine my son, and prescribe what you think efficacious to cure him."

Thereupon the little doctor began to inquire into the state of the patient; and after having pointed out to me all the symptoms which denoted the character of the disease, he asked me what I thought the best method of treatment. "I am of opinion," I replied, "that he should be bled every day, and be made to drink warm water copiously." At these words the little doctor said, smiling sarcastically, "And you believe that these remedies will save his life?" "Not a doubt of it," I exclaimed in a resolute tone; "you will see him get better visibly; they must produce that effect, since they are specifics against every kind of disease. Ask Dr Sangrado!" "In that case," he replied, "Celsus is very wrong in declaring that the readiest way to cure a dropsical person is to make him suffer hunger and thirst." "O, Celsus!" I rejoined; "I have not much faith in him; he makes mistakes like other men; sometimes I am very thankful to have acted against

his opinions, and have found it beneficial." "I recognise by your language," said Cuchillo, "the sure and satisfactory method which Dr Sangrado imparts to young practitioners. Blood-letting and drenching constitute his whole art of medicine. I am not surprised that so many worthy people die under his hands." "Do not let us descend to invective," I interrupted, rather abruptly; "really, a gentleman of your profession had better not make such reproaches. Come, come, my learned doctor, without bleeding and without drinking warm water, many patients are sent to the other world; and maybe you have yourself hurried off more than anyone else. If you have anything to say against Dr Sangrado, commit it to paper; he will reply, and we shall see on whose side the laughers will be." "By Saint Iago and Saint Denis," he interrupted in his turn, hotly, "you hardly know Dr Cuchillo. Know that I have tooth and nails, and that I am not at all afraid of Sangrado, who, despite his presumption and vanity, is but a ninny!" The little doctor put me in a rage. I replied to him sharply; he rejoined in the same manner, and we soon came to fisticuffs. We had time to give each other a few blows, and to tear out a few handfuls of hair, before the grocer and his relative could separate us. When they had done this they paid me my fee, and retained my antagonist, who apparently seemed to them to be cleverer than I.

After this adventure, I was near having another. I went to see a fat precenter who had caught a fever. As soon as he heard me talk of warm water, he showed himself so averse to this specific that he began to swear. He called me a great many names, and even threatened to throw me out of the window if I did not make haste to be gone. He had no need to repeat his threat; I went away promptly, and not caring to see more patients that day, betook myself to the tavern where I had made an appointment with Fabricio. He was already there. Being in a mood to tipple, we drank hard, and returned to our masters' in good spirits, that is to say, half seas over. Dr Sangrado did not notice my intoxication, because I related to him with so many gestures the quarrel I had had with the little doctor, that he took my vivacity for an effect of the agitation not yet subsided after the combat. Moreover, he himself fired up at the story I told him; and, being incensed against Cuchillo, he said: "You did well, Gil Blas, to defend the credit of our remedies against that little abortion of the faculty. So he pretends that we ought not to administer aqueous draughts to dropsical patients? What an ignorant fellow! I maintain that we must employ them. Yes, water," he continued, "is a cure for all sorts of dropsies; and it is just as good for rheumatism and the green sickness. It is also excellent in

those fevers where the patient burns and shivers at the same time, and its effects are miraculous in diseases attributed to cold, serous, phlegmatic, and pituitous humours. This opinion may seem strange to young physicians like Cuchillo, but it can be defended by theory and practice; and if those men were capable of reasoning logically instead of running me down as they do, they would admire my method, and become my most zealous partisans."

He was in such a rage that he did not suspect me of being intoxicated, for to exasperate him still more against the little doctor, I had embellished my story with several circumstances of my own invention. However, engrossed as he was by what I had told him, he did not fail to notice that I drank more water than usual this evening.

In fact the wine had made me very thirsty. The suspicion of any one else but Sangrado would have been awakened by the thirst that consumed me, and the great draughts of water I tossed off; but he, fancying seriously that I was beginning to acquire a taste for watery potions, said to me with a smile: "I can see, Gil Blas, that you no longer have such an aversion for water. Od's life, you drink it like nectar. That does not astonish me, my friend; I knew that you would get used to this liquid." "Sir," I replied, "there is a time for everything; I would give just

now a hogshead of wine for a pint of water." This answer delighted the doctor, who did not lose so good an opportunity of extolling the excellence of water. He began a new panegyric upon it, not as a calm orator, but as an enthusiast. "A thousand times," he exclaimed, "a thousand thousand times more estimable and more innocent than the taverns of our days, were those water-establishments of former ages, whither men did not go shamefully to prostitute their wealth and their life in glutting themselves with wine, but where they met to amuse themselves, decently and without risk, by drinking warm water! We cannot too much admire the wise foresight of those ancient worthies of the state, who established places of public resort, where water was given to all comers, and who confined wine to the shops of the apothecaries, permitting its use only by prescription of the physicians. What a stroke of wisdom! Doubtless," he added, "it is by some happy remains of this ancient frugality, worthy of the golden age, that persons are found to this day who, like you and me, drink nothing but water, and who as a preventive against, or as a cure for all ailments, believe in drinking warm water that has never boiled; for I have observed that when water has been boiled it is heavier and sits less easily on the stomach."

Whilst holding forth thus eloquently, I

more than once thought I should burst out laughing. Yet I maintained my gravity. I did more; I entered into the doctor's views. I blamed the use of wine, and pitied mankind for having unhappily acquired a taste for so pernicious a beverage. Then, as my thirst was not yet quenched, I filled a large goblet with water, and after taking a deep draught, said to my master. "Come, sir, let us quaff this beneficent liquor! Let us revive in your house the ancient water-taverns which you regret so much!" He applauded these words, and exhorted me for a whole hour never to drink anything but water. I promised him, in order to accustom myself to this beverage, to imbibe a large quantity every night; and, the better to keep my promise, I went to bed resolved to go to the tavern every day.

The annoyance that I had suffered at the grocer's did not deter me from continuing to exercise my profession, and to prescribe, the very next day, blood-letting and warm water. As I was coming away from a poet in a frenzy, I was accosted in the street by an old woman, who asked me if I were a physician. I replied affirmatively. "In that case," she replied, "doctor, I beg you most humbly to come with me. My niece was taken ill yesterday, and I do not know what is the matter with her." I followed the old woman, who conducted me to her house, where

I was shown into a rather neatly furnished room, where a female was in bed. I approached to look at her. Her features struck me from the first; and after having observed her for some moments, I recognised, beyond doubt, the adventuress who had so dexterously acted the part of Camilla. As for her, she did not seem to remember me, either overcome by her sickness, or my physician's gown prevented me from being recognised. I took her by the hand to feel her pulse, and perceived my ring on her finger. I was vastly moved by the sight of a piece of property that I had a right to seize, and I felt a great desire to attempt to regain it; but considering that these women would set up a cry, and that Don Raphael or some other defender of the fair sex might rush in at their call, I took good care not to yield to the temptation. I reflected that it was better to dissemble, and consult Fabricio on the subject, and on this course I determined. Meanwhile the old woman pressed me to tell her from what malady her niece was suffering. I was not foolish enough to confess that I had not the slightest notion; on the contrary, affecting the man of skill, and, copying my master, I gravely said that the disorder arose from the patient's want of perspiration; that therefore no time should be lost in bleeding her, because blood letting was the natural

substitute for perspiration; and I also prescribed the warm water, that I might do things methodically.

I shortened my visit as much as possible, and ran to meet the son of Nunez, whom I encountered as he was coming out on an errand for his master. I related to him my new adventure, and asked if he thought I should have Camilla arrested by the officers of justice. "By no means," he replied. "Od's life, you must take care not to do that; you would never get your ring again that way. Those gentry don't like to make restitutions. Call to mind the prison of Astorga; your horse, your money, your very clothes—did they not all remain in their hands? We must rather set our wits to work to get your diamond back. I undertake to hit on a trick that will manage it. I shall go and ponder it over on my way to the hospital, where I have two words to say to the steward from my master. Wait for me at our tavern, and don't grow impatient; I shall soon be with you."

Nevertheless I was for more than three hours at the appointed place before he arrived. I did not recognise him at first. He had not only changed his dress and platted his hair, but a false moustache covered half his face. He wore a big sword, the hilt of which must have been at least three feet in circumference, and walked at the head of five men, who, like him,

had a determined look, thick moustaches, and long rapiers. "Your servant, Señor Gil Blas," he said, addressing me; "you behold in me an alguazil after a new fashion, and in these honest fellows who accompany me, officers of justice of the same stamp. You have only to take us to the woman who has stolen your diamond, and we will make her restore it, I give you my word." On hearing this, I embraced Fabricio, who explained to me the stratagem which he intended to use on my behalf; and I assured him that I vastly approved the plan he had conceived. I also paid my respects to the mock officers of justice. They were three servants and two journeymen barbers of his acquaintance, whom he had engaged to act these parts. I ordered some wine to regale the whole brigade, and we went all together to Camilla's residence about nightfall. We knocked at the door which we found closed. The old woman came and opened it to us; and taking my companions for bloodhounds of the law, who were not come to the house without cause, she was terribly frightened. "Do not make yourself uneasy, good mother," Fabricio said to her; "we are only come on a little business which will soon be settled, for we are expeditious people." With these words we advanced, and entered the room of the sick female, conducted by the old woman, who walked in front of us, with a wax taper in a silver candlestick. I took the candle, went to



the bedside, and making Camilla take particular notice of my features, I said to her: "Wretch, recognise the too credulous Gil Blas whom you deceived! Ah, wicked woman, I have found you at length, after seeking you so long! The corregidor has received my information, and he has ordered this alguazil to arrest you. Come, officer," I said to Fabricio, "do your duty." "No need to tell me to do my duty," he said, raising his voice. "I well recollect that creature; these ten years she has been marked with red letters in my note-book. Get up, my lady," he added; "dress yourself quickly; I shall be your squire, and take you to the city prison, if you have no objection."

At these words, Camilla, ill as she was, perceiving that two of his followers with big moustaches were preparing to pull her out of bed by main force, sat up of her own accord, clasped her hands in a suppliant manner, and, looking at me with eyes in which terror was depicted, said, "Señor Gil Blas, have mercy on me; I beseech you by the chaste mother who bore you; I am more unfortunate than guilty; you shall be convinced of it if you will hear my story." "No, Miss Camilla," I cried, "no, I will not listen to you. I know too well that you excel in romancing." "Well," she replied, "since you will not let me justify myself, I will return your diamond, but do not ruin

me.” At these words she drew the ring from her finger and gave it to me. But I answered that my diamond was not enough, and that I required the restitution of the thousand ducats which had been stolen from me in the furnished lodgings. “O! as for your ducats, Señor, ask me not about them. That scoundrel, Don Raphael, whom I have not seen from that time to this, carried them off the same night.” “What, my little darling,” said Fabricio, “have you nothing better to say, to get out of the scrape, than that you had not part of the cake? You will not get off so cheaply. Your complicity with Don Raphael is enough to oblige you to give an account of your past life. You must have plenty of things on your conscience. You shall go to prison, therefore, if you please, to make a general confession. I shall also take this old gentlewoman along with you,” he continued; “I imagine that she knows a great many curious stories which the corregidor will not be sorry to hear.”

At these words the two women did all they could to soften us. They made the room resound with cries, complaints, and lamentations. Whilst the old woman, on her knees, sometimes to the alguazil, sometimes to his followers, tried to excite their compassion, Camilla implored me, in the most touching manner possible, to save her from the hands of justice. It was a sight to be seen. At last I pretended to

yield. "Officer," I said to the son of Nunez, "since I have got my diamond, I can overlook the rest. I hope no further trouble will be given to this poor woman; I do not desire the death of the sinner." "Tush," he replied, "you are humane. You would not make a good officer of justice. I must fulfil my duty," he continued, "I have been distinctly ordered to arrest these women; the corregidor means to make an example of them." "Nay, I beg you," I rejoined, "to have some regard to my request, and to relax a little the discharging of your duty in return for the present these ladies will make you." "Oh, that is another affair," he replied; "that is what we call an appropriate figure of speech. Come, let us see what they have to give me?" "I have a pearl necklace," said Camilla, "and ear-rings of considerable value." "Yes," he interrupted roughly, "but if they come from the Philippine islands, I will have none of them." "You may take them safely," she replied, "I warrant them real." At the same time she made the old woman bring a small box, from which she took out the necklace and the ear-rings, which she put into the alguazil's hands. Though he was no better judge of precious stones than I, he made no doubt that those in the ear-rings, as well as the pearls, were genuine. "These trinkets," he said, after having looked at them carefully, "seem to me of good quality; and

if you add to these the silver candlestick that Señor Gil Blas is holding, I cannot answer further for my fidelity." "I do not think," said I to Camilla, "that you would for a trifle spoil an arrangement so much to your advantage." Whilst uttering these words I took out the candle, which I handed to the old woman, and gave the candlestick to Fabricio, who, being satisfied, probably because he saw nothing more in the room which could be readily carried away, said to the two women: "Farewell, ladies, do not make yourselves uneasy. I shall speak to the corregidor, and represent you as whiter than snow. We know how to turn matters as we please, and we only tell him the truth when nothing induces us to tell a falsehood."

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE ADVENTURE OF THE RECOVERY
OF THE RING. GIL BLAS BRINGS TO A CLOSE
HIS MEDICAL CAREER AND HIS SOJOURN IN
VALLADOLID.

AFTER having thus carried out the plan of Fabricio, we left Camilla's house, congratulating ourselves upon a success which exceeded our expectation, for we had only reckoned on the ring, whilst we took also the other things with-

out any ceremony. Far from feeling a scruple at having plundered courtesans, we thought we had done a meritorious action. "Gentlemen," Fabricio said to us when we were in the street, "after having done such a fine stroke of business shall we separate without exulting over it, glass in hand? I do not think so, and it is my opinion that we should go back to our tavern, and spend the night in making merry. To-morrow we will sell the candlestick, the necklace, and the ear-rings, and share the money like brothers; after which each of us will return home, and make the best excuse he can to his master." The idea of the worthy alguazil struck us as very judicious. We all returned to the tavern, some considering that they could easily find an excuse for staying out all night, and others hardly caring whether they were dismissed or not.

We ordered a good supper, and sat down to table with as much appetite as cheerfulness. The meal was flavoured with a thousand pleasant speeches. Fabricio especially, who knew how to enliven conversation, greatly entertained the company. I know not how many witticisms flavoured with Castilian salt, which is quite as good as the Attic, escaped him; but as we were at the height of our merriment, our pleasure was suddenly disturbed by an unforeseen and most disagreeable incident. There entered the room where we

were at supper a man of pretty good appearance, followed by two others of very sinister aspect. After these three more appeared, and we counted no less than a dozen who entered in this manner, three at a time. They were armed with carbines, swords, and bayonets. We saw clearly that they were soldiers of the patrol, and it was not difficult to guess their intention. At first we had some thought of resisting, but they instantly surrounded us, and awed us, not only by their number but also by their fire-arms. "Gentlemen," said the captain with a jesting air, "I am aware how ingeniously you have just recovered a ring from the hands of a certain adventuress. No doubt the joke is excellent, and deserves a public recompense, which indeed you shall not lose. The law, which will afford you a residence in its palace, will not fail to reward such a brilliant stroke of genius." We were one and all disconcerted by this speech. Our countenances changed, and we felt in our turn the same terror with which we had inspired Camilla. Nevertheless Fabricio, though pale and dismayed, endeavoured to justify us. "Señor," said he, "we meant no ill, and consequently this little escapade ought to be forgiven us." "What the deuce," replied the captain in a rage, "do you call this a little escapade? Do you not know that it is a hanging matter? Besides, no man may

do justice to himself, and you have carried off a candlestick, a necklace, and ear-rings; and, what is undoubtedly a hanging matter, in order to commit this theft you disguised yourselves as officers of justice. Wretches dressing themselves up as honest men to do evil! I shall think you are very lucky if you are only condemned to the galleys.”¹ When he had convinced us that the affair was more serious than we had first thought it, we all cast ourselves at his feet, and begged him to pity our youth; but our prayers were useless. Moreover, what is altogether extraordinary, he rejected the proposal we made to give up to him the necklace, ear-rings, and candlestick; he even refused my ring, perhaps because I offered it to him before too large a company. In short, he showed himself inexorable. He ordered my companions to be disarmed, and took us all together to the town prison. As we went along, one of the guard told me that the old woman who lived with Camilla, having suspected that we were not genuine runners of the law, had followed us to the tavern; and that, her suspicions being there converted into certainty, she had given information to the patrol, in order to be avenged on us.

To begin with, they searched us thoroughly.

¹ In the original *à faucher le grand pré*, literally “to mow the large meadow,” that is, the sea swept by the big oars of the galley slaves.

They took away the necklace, the ear-rings, and the candlestick. They also took from me my ring with the ruby from the Philippine Islands, which unfortunately I had in my pocket. They did not even leave me the reals which I had that very day received for my prescriptions, which showed that the officers of justice in Valladolid knew how to do their duty quite as well as those of Astorga, and that these gentlemen everywhere had identical manners. Whilst they were easing me of my trinkets and coin, the officer of the patrol who was present related our adventure to the agents of our spoliation. The affair seemed to them so serious that the majority considered us worthy of the penalty of death; others, less severe, said that we might be let off with two hundred lashes each, and a few years at the galleys. Awaiting the sentence of the corregidor, we were shut up in a dungeon, where we slept on straw spread almost as thickly as in a stable littered for horses. We might have remained there a long time, and have been turned out only to proceed to the galleys, if on the next day Señor Manuel Ordonez had not heard of our scrape, and resolved to get Fabricio out of prison, which he could not do without delivering us all. He was a man much thought of in the town. He did not spare his solicitations; and what with his own influence and that of his friends, he

obtained our liberation at the end of three days. But we did not get out of this place as we went in; the candlestick, the necklace, the ear-rings, my ring and the ruby, all remained behind, which reminds me of Virgil's verses, beginning: *Sic vos non vobis*.

As soon as we were at liberty we returned to our masters. Dr Sangrado received me kindly. "My poor Gil Blas," he said to me, "it was only this morning I heard of your misfortune. I was about to make strong solicitations on your behalf. You must console yourself for this accident, my friend, and apply yourself more than ever to medicine." I replied that this was my intention; and indeed I threw myself into it thoroughly. I was far from lacking occupation. As my master had foretold, there was plenty of sickness. Small-pox and malignant fevers began to rage in the town and the suburbs. All the physicians in Valladolid had plenty of business, and we in particular. No day passed without our seeing each eight or ten patients, which implies much water drunk and blood shed. But I do not know how it happened, they all died; whether we treated them amiss or whether their diseases were incurable. We rarely made three visits to the same person. At the second we either learned that he had just been buried, or we found him at his last gasp. As I was only a young physician who had not had time to become inured to

murder, I was troubled at these fatal events which might be attributed to me. "Sir," I said to Dr Sangrado one evening, "I call Heaven to witness that I follow your method exactly ; yet all my patients go to the other world. One would think they took a pleasure in dying to discredit our system. I met two to-day being carried to the grave." "My lad," he replied, "I could tell you pretty much the same story. I have not often the satisfaction of curing those who fall into my hands ; and if I were not as confident about my principles as I am, I might believe my remedies unsuited to nearly all the diseases which come under my care." "If you will take a hint, sir," I replied, "we had better change our method. Let us, by way of experiment give our patients some chemical preparations ; let us try *kermes*.¹ The worst that can happen will be that it produces the same result as our warm water and bleedings." "I would willingly make the experiment," he replied, "if it were a matter of indifference. But I have published a book in which I extol frequent bleedings and the use of water :²

¹ *Kermes minéral*, an artificial sulphurate of mercury reduced to a fine powder.

² Dr Philippe Hecquet (1661-1737), already mentioned (see Bk. II., Ch. ii. page 130, Note 1), published in 1707. a volume in praise of the efficacy of bleeding and taking copious draughts of water in all cases of illness. He, besides, attacked the physicians and surgeons in *Le Brigandage de la Médecine, etc.*, and in *Le Brigandage de la Chirurgie, etc.*, which saw the light in the years 1732 and 1738. His *Brigandage de la Pharmacie* appeared in 1740.

would you have me traduce my own work?" "Oh, you are right," I replied; "we must not afford your enemies such a triumph over you. They would say that you had discovered your mistake, and would ruin your reputation. Rather perish the people, the nobility, and the clergy! Let us then continue our own way. After all, our colleagues, in spite of their aversion to bleeding, cannot work greater miracles than we; and I believe that their drugs are as efficacious as our specifics."

We went to work afresh, and in less than six weeks we made as many widows and orphans as the siege of Troy. It seemed as though the plague were in Valladolid, so many funerals were there. Every day some father came to the house to call us to account for a son we had robbed him of, or some uncle who reproached us with the death of his nephew. As for the nephews and sons whose uncles and fathers we had despatched by our remedies, they did not make their appearance. The husbands, too, were very discreet; they did not wrangle over the loss of their wives; but the afflicted sufferers whose reproaches we had to endure were occasionally quite savage in their grief. They called us blockheads, assassins, and did not measure their terms. I was affected by their epithets; but my master, who was used to it, listened to them with the utmost indifference. I might have grown as callous to insults as

he was, if Heaven, doubtless to rid the sick people of Valladolid of one of their scourges, had not brought to pass an incident that gave me a disgust for medicine, which I was practising with so little success. I shall faithfully set forth the details, even if my readers should laugh at me.

* There was in our neighbourhood a tennis-court,¹ where the idlers of the town assembled daily. Among them was one of those professional bullies who set themselves up for umpires, and decide gambling quarrels. He was a native of Biscay, and called himself Don Rodrigo de Mondragon. He seemed about thirty years old, was of middling height, but lean and wiry, with two little sparkling eyes, rolling in his head, and appearing to threaten all on whom they looked. He had a very broad nose, coming down over a red moustache, which curled upwards to his temples. His phraseology was so rough and abrupt that he had only to speak to inspire you with terror. This racket-breaker had become the tyrant of the tennis-court. He decided imperiously the disputes which arose amongst the players; and no man dared appeal from his decisions unless he was prepared to receive a challenge from him on the next day. Don Rodrigo, such as I have drawn him,—and the “Don” which he

¹ In the original *tripot*, a word now only used for a low gambling house.

prefixed to his name did not prevent him from being low-born,—contrived to make a tender impression on the mistress of the tennis-court. She was a woman of about forty, rich, rather pleasant, and in the fifteenth month of her widowhood. I know not how he succeeded in pleasing her; it was certainly not by his beauty. It must have been by that indescribable something which cannot be expressed. However that might be, she took a fancy to him, and intended to marry him. But as she was preparing to bring this matter to a conclusion, she fell ill; and, unfortunately for her, I became her physician. Even if her illness had not been a putrid fever, my prescriptions would have sufficed to make it dangerous. In four days the tennis-court was in mourning. Its mistress went the way of all my patients, and her relatives took possession of her estate. Don Rodrigo, in despair at losing his mistress, or rather the hope of a very advantageous marriage, was not content with cursing and reviling me; he swore that he would run me through the body, and make an end of me the first time he met me. A good-natured neighbour apprised me of this vow, and the knowledge I had of Mondragon, instead of making me despise the warning, filled me with anxiety and dismay. I dared not go out through fear of meeting that confounded fellow, and I continually fancied that I saw him come raging

into the house. I could not enjoy one moment's repose. This detached me from the practice of medicine, and I thought of nothing but to get rid of my anxiety. I resumed my embroidered suit, and after having taken leave of my master, who could not persuade me to stay, I left the town at daybreak, not without a fear of being waylaid by Don Rodrigo.

CHAPTER VI.

BY WHAT ROAD GIL BLAS LEFT VALLADOLID, AND
WHAT SORT OF MAN JOINED HIM BY THE WAY.

I WALKED very fast, and looked behind me from time to time, to see if the terrible Biscayan were following me. My imagination was so engrossed by this man, that I took every tree and bush for him. I felt my heart throb each moment with fright. But after having gone above a league, I felt reassured, and went on more gently towards Madrid, whither I proposed to direct my steps. I should have left Valladolid without reluctance, if I had not regretted my separation from Fabricio, my dear Pylades, to whom I could not even bid adieu. I was not sorry to renounce physic. On the contrary I prayed Heaven to forgive me for having practised it. I none the less counted the coin in

my pockets, though it was the wages of my assassinations. I was somewhat like those women who though they have ceased to lead a gay life, nevertheless always carefully retain the wages of sin. I had in reals pretty nearly five ducats: that was all I possessed. I expected with these to reach Madrid, where I did not doubt I should find some good place. Moreover, I passionately longed to be in that magnificent city, which had been extolled to me as an epitome of all the wonders of the world.

As I was recalling all that I had heard in its praise, and enjoying its pleasures beforehand, I heard the voice of a man walking behind me, and singing loudly. He had a leathern wallet on his back, a guitar suspended from his neck, and a rather long sword by his side. He walked so briskly that he soon overtook me. He was one of the journeymen barbers with whom I had been in prison for the adventure of the ring. We at once recognised each other, though we each appeared in a different dress, and were much surprised at our meeting on the high road. I expressed my pleasure at having him for a travelling companion, and he seemed on his side extremely glad to see me again. I told him why I was leaving Valladolid; and he, to be equally confidential with me, mentioned to me that he had quarrelled with his master, and that they had wished each other good-bye for ever. "If I had liked to remain longer at

Valladolid," he added, "I could as easily have found employment in ten shops as in one; for I venture to say, without vanity, that there is no barber in Spain who knows better than I how to shave with the grain and against the grain,¹ or how to curl a moustache. But I could no longer resist the vehement desire to return to my own country, which I left ten years ago. I want to breathe my native air, and see how my parents are getting on. I shall be with them the day after to-morrow; for the place where they live, Olmedo, is a large village, this side of Segovia."

I determined to accompany this barber as far as his home, and then to proceed to Segovia in search of an opportunity of reaching Madrid. We began conversing of various matters on our way. The young fellow was good humoured, with a pleasant wit. After an hour's talk he asked me if I were hungry. I told him he should see it at the first inn. "Before we get there," he said, "we had better make a halt; I have some breakfast in my wallet. When I travel I always take care to have provisions; I do not load myself with a coat, linen, and other useless luggage; I want nothing superfluous, and put in my wallet only eatables, my razors, and a soap-ball; and that is all I want." I commended his prudence, and willingly consented to the halt which he sug-

¹ In the original *à poil et à contrepoil*.

gested. I was hungry, and ready for a good meal, and after what he had said I began to look for it. We turned aside a little from the highway, and sat down on the grass. There my barber friend spread out his victuals, consisting of five or six onions, with some scraps of bread and cheese; but what he brought out as the best of his store was a small leather bottle, full, he told me, of delicate and choice wine. Though the food was not very savoury, our hunger did not permit either of us to be dainty; and we also emptied the bottle which contained about two pints of a kind of wine of which he need not have boasted. After that we rose, and resumed our journey very cheerfully. The barber, who had been told by Fabricio that I had met with some very remarkable adventures, begged to hear them from my own mouth. I thought I could refuse nothing to a man who had regaled me so well, and I gratified his curiosity. Then I asked him, in return for my compliance, also to tell me the history of his life. "Oh, as for my history," he replied, "it is hardly worth hearing; it contains but very common occurrences. Nevertheless," he added, "as we have nothing better to do, I shall relate it to you, such as it is." Whereupon he told his story pretty nearly in these words.



CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNEYMAN BARBER'S STORY.

FERDINAND PERES DE LA FUENTA, my grandfather (I am beginning the tale rather early), after having been for fifty years a barber in the village of Olmedo, died, and left four sons. The eldest, named Nicholas, took the shop, and succeeded him in the business. Bertrand, the next, having an inclination for trade, became a mercer; and Thomas, the third, turned schoolmaster. As for the fourth, who was called Pedro, feeling himself born for polite literature, he sold a small piece of land which was his share of his patrimony, and went to Madrid, where he hoped one day to distinguish himself by his erudition and his intelligence. The other three brothers did not separate. They established themselves at Olmedo, and married some farmers' daughters, who brought them not much property, but, to make up for it, plenty of children. They got babies as though in competition with each other. My mother, the barber's wife, for her share, brought six into the world during the first five years of her marriage, and I was one of them. My father taught me to shave betimes; and when I was fifteen he put on my shoulders this wallet, fastened a long sword round my waist, and said: "Go, *etc.*

Diego, now you are in a way to earn your living; go and see the world. You need travel to give you a polish, and to improve you in your art. Off with you, do not come back to Olmedo until you have made the tour of Spain. Let me hear nothing of you until then!" At these words he embraced me affectionately, and shoved me out of the house.

That was my father's farewell. My mother, whose manners were less rough, seemed more affected by my departure. She shed a few tears, and even by stealth slipped a ducat into my hand. Thus, then, did I leave Olmedo, and took the road to Segovia. I had not gone a couple of hundred yards before I stopped to examine my knapsack. I wanted to see what was inside, and to know exactly what I possessed. I found two razors in a case, which looked as if they had shaved ten generations, so worn were they; a leathern strap to set them on; and a piece of soap. Besides this there was a coarse shirt, quite new, an old pair of shoes of my father's, and, what pleased me more than all the rest, a score of reals wrapped in a linen rag. This was my whole fortune. You may conclude that Master Nicholas the barber was placing a good deal of reliance on my dexterity when he sent me adrift with so slender a provision. Nevertheless, the possession of a ducat and twenty reals did not fail to turn the head of a young fellow who had never had any money.

I thought my funds inexhaustible ; and, transported with joy, I pursued my journey, looking down every moment at the hilt of my sword, of which the blade was knocking against my calf at every step, or getting entangled between my legs.

In the evening I arrived at the village of Ataquines with a very keen appetite. I put up at the inn, and as if I had been in a position to spend money, I called for my supper with an air of authority. The landlord looked at me for some time, and seeing whom he had to deal with, said civilly, "All right, my worthy master, you shall be satisfied ; we will treat you like a lord." With this assurance he showed me into a little room, where, a quarter of an hour later, he brought me a stew made of tom cat, which I ate as eagerly as if it had been hare or rabbit. This excellent stew was washed down by a wine which, it was told me, was so good that the king could drink no better. I found out, however, that it was sour ; but that did not prevent me from doing it as much honour as I had done to the tom cat. The next thing needed to treat me like a lord was to show me a bed more suited to drive sleep away than to invite it. Imagine a very narrow truckle bed, so short that I could not stretch my legs, small as I was. In place of mattress and feather bed, there was but a simple straw pallet, covered with a doubled-up

sheet, which had served perhaps a hundred travellers since it was last washed. Nevertheless, in the bed I have described, my stomach full of the stew and the delicious wine which my landlord had given me, I slept soundly, thanks to my youth and a good constitution, and spent the night without indigestion.

On the following day, when I had breakfasted and paid well for my good cheer, I went without stopping to Segovia. I had hardly got there when I was lucky enough to get employed in a shop for my board and lodging; but I only stayed there six months. A journeyman barber whose acquaintance I had made, and who wished to go to Madrid, led me astray, and I set out with him for that city. There I had no difficulty in getting a place on the same conditions as at Segovia, in one of the most frequented shops. The fact is, it was near the church of the Holy Cross, and through the proximity of the Prince's Theatre, drew much custom. My master, two strapping fellows, and myself, were hardly able to attend to all who came to be shaved; amongst whom there were men of all conditions, and actors and authors as well. One day two persons of this latter description happened to meet there. They began talking about the poets and poems of the day, and I heard them mention the name of my uncle, which made me pay more attention to what they were saying. "Don Juan de Zabaleta," said one, "is an author on whom, it seems to me, the public

cannot rely. He is cold, without fancy: his last piece has greatly lowered his reputation." "And, pray, has not Luis Velez de Guevara,¹" said the other, "published a fine work! Was ever anything more wretched?" They mentioned a great many more poets, whose names I have forgotten; I only remember that they spoke very ill of them. As for my uncle they named him with more favour; both agreed that he had some merit. "Yes," said one, "Don Pedro de la Fuente is an excellent author. His books contain delicate raillery, mingled with learning. They are piquant and full of wit. No wonder he is valued by court and city, and that more than one nobleman gives him a pension."² "He has enjoyed a pretty large income for many years," said the other. "He boards and lodges at the Duke of Medina Celi, is at no expense, and must be very well off."

I did not lose a word of what these poets said about my uncle. We had heard in the family that he had made a noise in Madrid by his writings. More than one person passing through Olmedo had told us so; but as he abstained from letting us hear from him, and

¹ Zabaleta, who flourished from 1653 to 1667, was the author of *Moral Problems and Famous Errors*; his best work is called *Feast Days at Madrid*, a satirical sketch of the manners of the time. He also wrote many dramas. Guevara, who has been called the Spanish Scarron, died in 1644.

² It is said that Lesage meant in his portrait of Pedro de la Fuente to have a hit at Fontenelle, who was receiving a pension from the Regent.

* seemed to have no longer any attachment for us, we on our side felt completely indifferent about him. However, the ties of blood cannot be gainsaid, and as soon as I heard that he was in good circumstances, and knew where he lived, I was tempted to go and call upon him. One thing embarrassed me. The authors had called him Don Pedro. This "Don" gave me some uneasiness, and I feared it might be some other poet, and not my uncle. This apprehension, however, did not restrain me; I thought he might have become ennobled as well as a wit, and determined to pay him a visit. Accordingly, with my master's permission, I one day dressed myself as well as I could, and marched out of the shop, not a little proud of being the nephew of a man who had acquired such a reputation by his genius. Barbers, of all people in the world, are not the most diffident. I began to have a great opinion of myself; and, walking with a haughty air, I inquired for the palace of the Duke of Medina Celi. I presented myself at the gate, and said that I wished to speak to Señor Don Pedro de la Fuente. The porter pointed with his finger to a little staircase at the bottom of the court-yard, and said, "Go up there, and knock at the first door on your right." I did as he told me, and knocked at a door. It was opened by a young man, whom I asked whether Señor Don Pedro de la Fuente

lived there. "Yes," he answered, "but you cannot see him just now." "I should like to speak to him," I said; "I bring him news of his family." "If you brought him news of the Pope, I could not take you into his chamber just now; he is composing, and when he is at work we must take care not to disturb him. He will not be visible till noon: take a turn, and come back about that time."

I went away, and walked through the town all morning, incessantly thinking what sort of a reception my uncle would give me. "I fancy," said I to myself, "he will be delighted to see me." I judged of his feelings by my own, and prepared myself for a very touching interview. I returned to his rooms with all haste, at the hour mentioned. "You are just in time," said his servant; "my master is about to go out. Wait here a moment; I will let him know you are come." With these words he left me in the antechamber. He returned almost immediately, and took me to his master, in whose face I at once observed a family likeness. He was the very image of my uncle Thomas, they were so like each other. I bowed with profound respect, and introduced myself as the son of Master Nicholas de la Fuente, the barber of Olmedo. I also told him that I had been for three weeks exercising my father's calling in Madrid as a journeyman, and that I intended to make the tour of Spain, to complete

my education. Whilst I spoke I saw that my uncle was buried in thoughts. He apparently hesitated whether he should disown me for his nephew, or get rid of me in a dexterous manner. He chose the latter course. He affected a smiling face, and said : “ Well, friend, how are your father and your uncles ? How are they getting on ? ” Thereupon I began to inform him of the rapid increase of our family, gave him the names of all the male and female children, and included in my list even their god-fathers and godmothers. He did not seem to be deeply interested in these details ; but coming to the point he said : “ Diego, I greatly approve of your travelling about to perfect yourself in your profession, and I advise you not to stay any longer in Madrid ; for it is a pernicious place for youth, and you may be ruined here, my lad. It will be better for you to go to the other towns in the kingdom, where people’s morals are not so much corrupted. Go,” he continued, “ and when you are ready to depart come and see me again ; I will give you a pistole to help you to make your tour of Spain.” With these words he gently turned me out of the room, and sent me about my business.

I had not the sense to perceive that he wished only to get rid of me. I went back to the shop and gave my master an account of the visit which I had just made. He fathomed the

intention of Don Pedro no better than I, and said to me: "I am not of your uncle's opinion; instead of advising you to travel about, I think he ought rather to urge you to stay in town. He visits so many persons of quality that he might easily get you a situation in some great family and put you in the way of gradually making a large fortune." Struck with this speech, which summoned up so many flattering images, I called two days later on my uncle, and proposed that he should use his influence to get me a situation with one of the court nobles. But the proposal was not to his taste. A vain man, having free access to the great, and dining with them every day, would not have liked to see his nephew at the servant's table whilst he was at the table of the master. Little Diego would have made Señor Don Pedro blush. Therefore he did not fail to dismiss me, and that in a very rude manner. "So, you little rascal," said he in a rage, "you want to give up your profession. Be off, I abandon you to those persons who give you such pernicious advice. Get out of my room, and never set your foot here again, or I will have you chastised as you deserve." I was absolutely dazed at these words, and still more at the tone assumed by my uncle. I retired with tears in my eyes, much hurt by his harsh behaviour towards me. However, as I have always been quick and proud by nature, I soon

dried my tears, even passed from grief to indignation, and resolved to take no further notice of this unworthy relative, having hitherto got on very well without him.

I thought of nothing now save the cultivation of my talent, and I applied myself to business. I shaved all day; and in the evening, by way of recreation, I learned to play the guitar. My master on that instrument was an old gentleman-in-waiting whom I shaved, and who taught me music, which he understood thoroughly. In fact he had formerly been a chorister in a cathedral. His name was Marcos de Obregon.¹ He was a discreet man, with as much intelligence as experience, and loved me as if I had been his son. He was gentleman-in-waiting to a physician's wife, who lived about thirty yards from our house. I went to him towards evening, as soon as I had done my work, and sitting on the threshold of the door we used both to produce a concert not displeasing to the neighbours. Not that we had very charming voices, but as we thrummed upon our instruments, we both regularly accompanied it with singing, and that was sufficient to please our audience. In particular we diverted Donna Mergelina,² the

¹ This is the name of the hero whose adventures Vicente Espinel (1551-1630) has described in Spanish, and from whom Voltaire thought Lesage had borrowed his *Gil Blas*. The INTRODUCTORY NOTICE tells the obligations of Lesage to the Spanish author.

² Llorente says this lady ought to be called Marcelina; but in Espinel's *Escudero Marcos de Obregon*, the name is given as Lesage wrote it.

physician's wife; she used to come into the passage to hear us, and sometimes made us begin over again the airs she liked best. Her husband did not prevent her amusing herself in this way. He was a man who, though a Spaniard, and already in years, was by no means jealous; besides, his profession entirely engrossed him, and when he came home in the evening, worn out with his visits, he went to bed early, without troubling himself about the attention his wife paid to our concerts. Perhaps he did not think them capable of producing any dangerous impressions. Moreover, he did not imagine that he had the slightest ground for apprehension. Mergelina was a young and handsome woman, it is true, but of so fierce a virtue that she could not so much as endure the looks of men. The doctor, therefore, did not begrudge her a pastime which seemed to him innocent and decorous, and allowed us to sing as much as we pleased.

One evening, as I came to the physician's door, intending to enjoy myself as usual, I found old Marcos awaiting me. He took me by the hand, and said that he wanted to take a little walk with me, before beginning our concert. At the same time he drew me into a side street, where, seeing that he could talk to me freely, he said with a sad air, "Diego, my lad, I have something particular to tell you. I much fear, my child, that we

shall both of us repent amusing ourselves every evening by singing together at my master's door. I certainly like you very much; I am glad I have taught you to play the guitar, and to sing; but if I had foreseen the misfortune which threatens us, please God I would have chosen some other spot to give you lessons in." These words frightened me. I begged him to explain himself more clearly, and tell me what we had to fear, for I was not the man to brave peril, and had not yet made the tour of Spain. "I will tell you," he replied, "what it concerns you to know, that you may comprehend the danger we are in. When I entered the doctor's service," he continued, "and that is a year ago, he said to me one morning, after having taken me into his wife's presence: 'Marcos, there is your mistress; this is the lady you are to accompany everywhere.' I admired Donna Mergelina; I thought her marvellously beautiful, strikingly handsome, and I was particularly charmed by her pleasant bearing. 'Sir,' I replied to the physician, 'I am too happy to have to serve so charming a lady.' My reply displeased Mergelina, who said bluntly: 'What is the matter with the man? I think he is making too free. I want no compliments!' These words, coming from such lovely lips, surprised me very much. I could not reconcile this rustic and unpolished form of speech with the gentle appearance of my mistress. But her

husband was accustomed to it, and congratulated himself on having a wife of such an eccentric disposition. 'Marcos,' he said to me, 'my wife is a prodigy of virtue.' Then, seeing that she was putting on her cloak, and preparing to go to mass, he bade me accompany her to church. We were no sooner in the street than we met several gentlemen who were naturally enough struck by Mergelina's appearance, and who paid her a great many compliments as they passed. She replied to them, but you cannot imagine how silly and ridiculous her answers were. They were quite astonished, being unable to imagine that there was a woman in the world who would take it amiss being complimented. 'Madam,' I said at first, 'pay no attention to the speeches addressed to you; it is better to keep silent than to reply with asperity.' 'No, no,' she answered, 'I will teach these insolent fellows that I am not the sort of woman to let them treat me with disrespect.' Indeed, she uttered so many impolite things that I could not help telling her my mind, at the risk of displeasing her. I told her, of course as delicately as I could, that she was acting unnaturally, and was marring a thousand good qualities by her angry mood; that a woman of gentle and polished manners might inspire love without being handsome, whilst a lovely lady would become an object of contempt if she were not gentle and polite. To those arguments I added many others of the like

nature, with the sole desire to mend her manners. After having moralised at some length, I was afraid that my frankness would excite my mistress's anger, and call forth some unpleasant reply. But she did not object to my remonstrance. She contented herself with rendering it of no avail; and so she did with the advice I was foolish enough to offer on the following days.

"I grew weary of pointing out her faults to no purpose, and abandoned her to the fierceness of her mood. However, would you believe it, this savage mind, this haughty woman, is entirely changed within the last two months? She has a kind word for everybody, and her manners are very pleasant. It is no longer the same Mergelina who returned such silly answers to the compliments the men paid to her. She has grown sensitive to praise; she even likes to be called handsome and to be told that a man cannot behold her with impunity. Flatteries please her; she is at present like any other woman. The change is almost incomprehensible; and what will still more surprise you is that you are the author of such a great miracle. Yes, dear Diego," continued Marcos, "it is you who have thus transformed Donna Mergelina; you have made a lamb of this tigress; in a word, you have attracted her notice. I have perceived it more than once; and I know nothing about the sex if she is not desperately in love with you. That, my dear child, is the sad

news I had to communicate—the awkward dilemma in which we find ourselves.”

“I do not see,” said I to the old man, “so great a reason for sorrow, nor that it is a misfortune for me to be loved by a pretty woman.” “Ah, Diego,” he replied, “you reason like a young man. You see only the bait without perceiving the hook. You look only to the pleasure, whilst I perceive all the unpleasant consequences. Everything comes to light in time; and if you continue singing at our door, you will stimulate the passion of Mergelina, who, possibly losing all command over herself, will betray her weakness to Dr Oloroso, her husband. This husband, who is now so easy, because he thinks he has no cause to be jealous, will become mad with rage; he will avenge himself on her, and he may perhaps play you and me a very bad trick.” “Well,” I replied, “Señor Marcos, I yield to your reasons, and submit myself to your counsels. Tell me how I ought to act to prevent such a sad misfortune.” “We have only to discontinue our concerts,” he rejoined. “Cease to show yourself to my mistress. When she sees you no more she will recover her peace of mind. Stay within doors; I will come to you, and we will play on the guitar without any danger.” “With all my heart,” said I, “and I promise never to set foot in your house again.” And in fact I resolved to sing no more at the door of the

physician's house; but to keep thenceforth within the shop, since my attractions as a man were so dangerous to look at.

However, honest Marcos, with all his prudence, discovered a few days later that the plan he had conceived to extinguish the flame of Donna Mergelina, produced an exactly opposite result. That lady, not hearing me sing for two nights together, asked him why we had discontinued our concerts, and why she saw me no more. He replied that I was so busy I had not a moment to give to pleasure. She seemed satisfied with this excuse, and for three days more she bore my absence with fortitude; but at the end of that time my lady lost all patience, and said to her attendant: "You are deceiving me, Marcos; Diego has not ceased his visits without a cause. There is some mystery which I mean to unravel. Speak, I command you; hide nothing." "Madam," he replied, making use of another subterfuge, "since you wish to know the truth, I will tell you that, after our concerts, he has often found the table cleared at home, and he cannot any longer run the risk of having to go to bed without his supper." "What! without his supper!" she cried in a tone of annoyance; "why did you not tell me that before? To go to bed without supper! Poor child! go and see him at once, and let him come again this evening. He shall not return any more with

an empty stomach. There shall always be a dish of something for him."

"What do I hear," said her attendant, pretending to be surprised at this speech; "good Heaven, what a change. Is it you, madam, who speak like this? Since when have you been so compassionate and considerate?" "Since you have been living in the house," she replied sharply, "or rather since you condemned my scornful bearing, and laboured to soften the acrimony of my temper. But alas!" she added in a melting tone, "I have gone from one extreme to another. Instead of being proud and unfeeling as I was, I have become too gentle and too susceptible; I love your young friend Diego, in spite of all my efforts to the contrary; and his absence, far from weakening my love, seems to give it new strength." "Is it possible," replied the old man, "that a lad who has neither a handsome countenance nor figure can be the object of so violent a passion? I could make allowance for your sentiments if they had been inspired by some nobleman of brilliant merit. . . ."

"Ah Marcos," interrupted Mergelina, "I am not like the rest of my sex; or rather, in spite of your long experience, you hardly know women if you believe that merit determines their choice. Judging by myself we become entangled without deliberation. Love is a disorder of the mind which draws us towards an object, and attaches us in spite of ourselves.

It is a malady which attacks us like madness does the brutes. Cease, therefore, to tell me that Diego is not worthy of my tenderness. It is enough that I love him to make me invest him with a thousand good qualities which escape your notice, and which he possibly does not possess. In vain you tell me that his features and his stature do not deserve the least attention; to me he seems made to charm, and lovelier than the day. Besides, his voice has a sweetness which thrills me, and in my opinion he plays on the guitar with quite a peculiar grace." "But, Madam," replied Marcos, "do you consider who Diego is? His mean station. . . ." "My own is very little better," she interrupted again, "and even if I were a lady of rank, that would make no difference."

The result of this conversation was that Marcos, concluding he should make no impression on his mistress's mind, ceased to oppose her infatuation, as the skilful pilot yields to the tempest which carries him out to sea instead of to the harbour he intends to reach. He did more: to satisfy his mistress, he came to me, took me aside, and after relating what had passed between him and her, said—"You see, Diego, that we cannot but continue our concerts at Mergelina's door. My friend, it is necessary for the lady to see you again, or else she might commit some foolish act which would injure her reputation more than anything." I did

not affect to be hard-hearted. I replied to Marcos that I would call on him in the evening with my guitar, and that he might take this pleasant news to his mistress. This he did not fail to do ; and it was for the impassioned and enamoured lady a subject of great rejoicing to learn that she should have the pleasure of seeing and hearing me that very night.

A very unpleasant accident, however, nearly frustrated this expectation. I could not leave my master's before night, and, for my sins, it was very dark. I went groping along the street, and had perhaps gone half the way, when from a window I was crowned with the contents of a vessel, which did not exactly tickle my olfactory nerves. I may safely say that I lost none of it, so well was it directed!¹ In this condition I did not know what to do : to return would have been a nice exhibition for my comrades, and would have exposed me to all sorts of coarse jokes. Then, again, to go on to Mergelina in this pretty state also hurt my feelings. Nevertheless, I resolved to make for the physician's house. At the door I found the

¹ This was no extraordinary occurrence in Madrid. In the *Voyages faits en divers temps en Espagne . . . et ailleurs*, 1699, it is stated : "*Il fait mauvais aller le soir par les rues de Madrid, et comme il n'y a pas de lieux communs, chacun a un grand pot où il fait toutes ses ordures, qu'on tient dans les greniers, que les valets vont vider le soir en criant 'Agua va,' c'est à dire, gare l'eau.*" Aarsens van Sommelsdyk in the 20th chapter of his *Voyage d'Espagne* says also : *Depuis qu'il est jour jusqu' à dix heures du soir, il est defendu, sous peine pécuniaire, de rien verser.*

old attendant waiting for me. He told me that Dr Oloroso had just gone to bed, and that we might amuse ourselves as we liked. I replied that I must first cleanse my clothes; and with that I related my mishap. He seemed to feel for me, and led me into the room where his mistress was. As soon as this lady heard what had happened, and saw the state I was in, she condoled with me as though the greatest misfortunes had overtaken me; then, apostrophising the person who had thus favoured me, she uttered a thousand imprecations. "But, Madam," Marcos said to her, "moderate your rage. Consider that this is the mere result of an accident. You should not resent it so deeply." "Why," she cried warmly, "why should I not resent deeply the wrong done to this little lamb, this dove without gall, who does not even complain of the outrage he has suffered? Alas! Would that I were a man at this moment, that I might avenge him!"

She uttered a vast number of expressions besides, denoting the excess of her love, which she manifested no less by her actions; for whilst Marcos was engaged in rubbing me dry with a towel, she ran to her room, and brought thence a box full of all sorts of perfumes. She burned odoriferous drugs, and perfumed my clothes with them, after which she sprinkled them all over with various essences. The fumigation and aspersion ended, this charitable

lady went herself into the kitchen, and fetched bread, wine, and some slices of roast mutton, which she had put aside for me. She made me eat, and, taking pleasure in waiting on me, sometimes carved for me, and then filled my glass, in spite of all that Marcos and I could do to prevent her. When I had finished supper, the gentlemen of the orchestra prepared to attune their voices to their guitars. We performed a concert which charmed Mergelina. To be sure we chose those airs the words whereof flattered her love; and I admit that as I sang I now and then cast a side-long glance at her, so as to add fuel to the flame, for the game was beginning to please me. The concert, though it lasted long, did not tire me. As for the lady, to whom the hours seemed minutes, she would willingly have spent the whole night in listening to us, if Marcos, to whom the minutes seemed hours, had not reminded her that it was late. She gave him the trouble of repeating this at least ten times. But he was irrepressible, and would not let her rest until I was gone, for being sensible and prudent, and seeing that his mistress had abandoned herself to a foolish passion, he feared that we should get into a scrape. His apprehensions were soon justified. The doctor—whether he suspected some secret intrigue, or whether the demon of jealousy, which had hitherto not visited him, had a mind to harass

him—took it into his head to find fault with our concerts. He did more; he forbade them in a peremptory manner, and without giving us any reasons for his behaviour, he declared that he would no more permit strangers to come into his house.

Marcos informed me of this declaration, which had special reference to me, and by which I was greatly mortified. I had conceived hopes which I was sorry to forego. Nevertheless, to record everything as a faithful historian, I must confess that I endured my misfortune patiently. It was not so with Mergelina. Her feelings became more violent than ever. “My dear Marcos,” she said to her attendant, “from you only do I look for aid. I beseech you, enable me to see Diego secretly.” “What are you asking me?” replied the old man, angrily. “I have already been too complaisant. I do not mean, to satisfy your mad passion, to assist you in dishonouring my master, in ruining your reputation, and in covering myself with infamy,—I who have always been considered a servant of irreproachable conduct; I would rather leave your house than act so shamefully.” “Ah, Marcos,” interrupted the lady, terrified by these last words, “you wound me to the heart when you talk of going away. Cruel man, are you going to abandon me after reducing me to the state I am in? Give me back, then, my former pride, and that fierce

spirit that you have taken from me ! Why do I not still possess those happy faults ? I might now have been at peace ; but your rash counsels have robbed me of the repose I then enjoyed. You have corrupted my morals by endeavouring to amend them. . . . But," she continued, weeping, "what am I saying, wretch that I am ? Why do I reproach you unjustly ? No, dear old man, you are not the author of my misfortune. It is my evil fate which has brought about so much annoyance. Do not notice, I beseech you, these extravagant speeches I utter in spite of myself. Alas ! my passion drives me mad ! Have compassion on my weakness. You are my only consolation ; and if my life is dear to you, do not refuse me your aid."

At these words her tears flowed so abundantly that she could not continue. She drew out her handkerchief, and, covering her face with it, threw herself into a chair, like a person overcome by her affliction. Old Marcos, who was perhaps the most kind-hearted ladies' squire that ever lived, could not resist so touching a sight. He was deeply moved by it ; he even mingled his tears with those of his mistress, and said to her in a softened tone : " Ah ! madam, how bewitching you are ! I cannot bear to see your grief ; it has overcome my virtue. I promise you my aid. I no longer wonder that love has power to make you forget your duty, when mere compassion is able to lead me from mine."

And accordingly the attendant, for all his irreproachable conduct, very obligingly became a slave to the passion of Mergelina. He came one morning and told me all this, and as he was going away, said he was already planning what must be done to procure me a secret interview with the lady. By this he rekindled my hope; but two hours later I heard some very bad news. An apothecary's assistant in our neighbourhood, one of our customers, came in to be shaved. As I was preparing to shave him he said to me, "Señor Diego, what is this about old Marcos de Obregon, your friend? Do you know that he is going to leave Dr Oloroso?" I replied in the negative. "It is a fact," he said, "he is to go to-day. His master and mine have just been talking it over before me, and their conversation was as follows. 'Señor Apuntador,'¹ said the doctor, 'I have a favour to ask of you. I am not satisfied with the old attendant whom I have in my house, and I should like to place my wife in the charge of a trusty, severe, and vigilant duenna.' 'I understand,' said my master. 'You need Dame Melancia.'² She was my wife's companion, and for the last six weeks since I have been a widower, has continued to live with me. Though she is useful in my house, I will give her up to you, on account of the par-

¹ *Apuntador* is the Spanish for "a marker, a pointer."

² *Melancia* means "honeyed."

ticular interest I take in your honour. You can rely on her for the safety of your brow: she is the pearl of duennas, a very dragon in guarding the chastity of the sex. During the twelve years she has been with my wife, who, as you know, was young and handsome, I never saw even the shadow of a gallant inside my house. Od's life, it was no place for their pranks! And let me tell you that the deceased lady had at first a strong propensity for coquetry; but Dame Melancia soon cooled her, and gave her a taste for virtue. In short, such a companion is a treasure, and you will never have done thanking me for making you this present.' Thereupon the doctor declared that these words gave him much pleasure, and they agreed that the duenna should come, this very day, and occupy the place of old Marcos."

This piece of news, which I believed to be true,—as indeed it was,—banished the pleasant fancies which I again began to entertain; and Marcos drove them out of my head effectually after dinner, by confirming the information of the apothecary's assistant. "My dear Diego," said the honest squire to me, "I am delighted that Dr Oloroso has turned me away; by so doing he has spared me much grief. Not only had I undertaken an evil course against my wish, but I should have had to contrive stratagems and subterfuges to enable you to speak in secret with Donna Mergelina. What

a trouble it would have been ! Thank Heaven, I am delivered from such perplexing cares, and from the danger accompanying them ! On your part, my lad, you must console yourself for the loss of a few pleasant moments, which might have been followed by a great many vexations." I appreciated the moralising of Marcos, because I had no longer any hope ; and I gave up the game. I must confess that I was not one of those obstinate lovers who bear up against obstacles : but even if I had been so, Dame Melancia would have made me abandon the attempt. The character which had been given me of that duenna seemed to me calculated to reduce all gallants to despair. Yet notwithstanding the colours she had been painted in, I had reason to know, two or three days afterwards, that the physician's wife had lulled this Argus to sleep, or else corrupted her fidelity. As I was going out to shave one of our neighbours, a decent old woman stopped me in the street, and asked if my name was Diego de la Fuente. I said it was. " That being the case," she replied, " I have some business with you. Be to-night at Donna Mergelina's door, and when you are there, give some signal or other, and you shall be introduced into her house." " Well," said I, " then we must agree upon the signal I am to give. I can imitate a cat to perfection ; I will mew several times." " That will do," replied the love-messenger, " I

will take back your reply. Your servant, Señor Diego; may Heaven preserve you! Ah, what a sweet youth you are! By Saint Agnes, if I were but fifteen, I would not engage you for other people." And with these words the obliging old woman left me.

You may easily imagine that I was much excited by this message. There was an end to the moralising of Marcos. I awaited the night with impatience; and when I imagined that Dr Oloroso was asleep, I betook myself to his door. There I began to mew in such a way that I must have been heard a long distance off, and doubtless did honour to the master who had taught me such a fine art. A moment later Mergelina came herself and softly opened the door, which she shut again as soon as I was inside. We went into the room where our last concert had been given, and which was dimly lighted by a little lamp, burning on the chimney. We sat down side by side to converse together, both very much overcome by our emotions, though with this difference, that hers were only inspired by pleasure, while mine were mingled with fear. It was to no purpose that the lady assured me we had nothing to dread from her husband; I felt a shivering which modified my joy. "Madam," I said to her, "how were you able to deceive the vigilance of your duenna? After what I had heard of Dame Melancia, I would not have

conceived it possible for you to find means of communicating with me, still less of seeing me privately." Donna Mergelina smiled at this remark, and answered: "You will cease to be surprised at the secret interview we hold together to-night when I have told you what has passed between my duenna and myself. As soon as she entered this house, my husband loaded her with civilities, and said to me, 'Mergelina, I commit you to the care of this discreet lady, who is an abstract of all the virtues, a mirror which you will always have before your eyes to improve you in wisdom. This admirable person has for twelve years been companion to the wife of an apothecary of my acquaintance. She controlled her—in a way no one could equal—nay, more, the wife became little short of a saint under her instruction.' This eulogy, which the severe appearance of Melancia did not belie, cost me many tears, and reduced me to despair. I thought of the lectures which I should have to hear from morning to night, and the reprimands I should have to endure every day. In short, I expected to become the most unhappy woman in the world. Caring for nothing in such a cruel predicament, I said with a resolute air, as soon as I found myself alone with my duenna: 'You are doubtless preparing to make me suffer a good deal, but I am not very patient, I forewarn you. I shall give you every possible

annoyance on my side. I admit at once that my heart cherishes a passion which your remonstrances will not uproot; so you may take your measures accordingly. Watch me as closely as you please, I assure you that I shall spare nothing to deceive you.' At these words the countenance of the grim duenna, whom I thought would lecture me well as a beginning, brightened up, and she said to me, smiling: 'You charm me, and your frankness encourages mine. I see that we are made for one another. Ah! lovely Mergelina, how little do you know me if you judge me by the character which your husband, the physician, has given me, or by my sour aspect! Far from being an enemy to pleasure, I minister to the jealousy of husbands, only to serve their pretty wives. I have long possessed the great art of wearing a mask, and I may say that I am doubly happy, since I enjoy at the same time the advantages of vice and a reputation acquired by virtue. Between ourselves, that is nearly the only way in which the world is virtuous. It costs too much to be genuinely virtuous. We are content in these days with its appearance. Let me direct you,' my companion pursued, 'and we shall hoodwink old Dr Oloroso. On my word he will soon have the same fate as Señor Apuntador! There is no reason why the forehead of a doctor should be more respected than that of an apothecary. Poor



Apuntador! How many tricks his wife and I have played him! She was a lovely creature, that wife of his; and so kind hearted! Heaven rest her soul! I can assure you that she spent her youth pleasantly. She had no end of lovers whom I introduced into her house, without her husband ever perceiving it. Look upon me, then, more favourably, Madam, and be persuaded that, whatever talent the old squire who was attending on you may have had, you will lose nothing by the change. I shall, perhaps, be still more useful to you than he was.'

"I leave you to imagine, Diego," continued Mergelina, "whether I was pleased with my duenna for so frankly unbosoming herself to me. I thought her a person of austere virtue. See how wrongly people judge women! She won my heart from the first moment by her sincerity. I threw my arms around her neck in a transport of joy, which told her beforehand how charmed I was to have her for a companion. I then confided all my feelings to her, and prayed her to arrange for a secret meeting with you as soon as possible. She has not failed to procure it. This very morning she engaged the old woman who spoke to you, and who is a go-between whom she has often employed for the apothecary's wife. But the funniest part of this adventure," she added, laughing, "is that Melancia, on hearing from me that my husband was in the habit of passing the night very

quietly, has gone to bed by his side, and is at this moment in my place." "So much the worse, madam," I at once said to Mergelina; "I do not think much of that invention. Your husband might easily wake, and discover the trick." "He will not discover it," she replied hastily. "Be not uneasy on that score, and do not allow a groundless fear to poison the pleasure you ought to feel in being in the company of a young lady who is well disposed towards you."

The old doctor's wife, perceiving that this speech did not allay my fear, omitted nothing she could think of to reassure me; and she took so many encouraging ways that she succeeded. I thought of nothing more save of profiting by my opportunity; but just as the divine Cupid, with his train of smiles and sports, was about to crown my happiness, we heard a loud knocking at the street door. Instantly Love and his attendants fled, like timid birds frightened by a sudden noise. Mergelina quickly concealed me under a table which stood in the room, blew out the lamp, and, as she had agreed with her companion, in the event of such an accident arising, placed herself at the door of the room where her husband slept. Meanwhile the knocking continued with reiterated violence, and resounded through the house. The doctor awoke with a start, and called for Melancia. The duenna leapt from the bed, although the doctor, thinking it was his wife, cried out to her

not to get up; she ran to her mistress, who, perceiving she was at her side, also called for Melancia, and told her to go and see who was knocking. "Madam," answered Melancia, "here I am; pray return to your bed; I shall go and see who it is." Mergelina, having in the meantime undressed herself, got into bed by the side of the doctor, who had not the least idea that he was being deceived. To be sure this comedy had been played in the dark by two actresses, of whom one was first-rate, and the other had all the disposition to become so.

The duenna, wrapt in a dressing-gown, soon afterwards made her appearance, holding a lighted candle in her hand. "Sir," she said to her master, "have the goodness to get up. Our neighbour, Fernandez de Buendia,¹ the bookseller, is in an apoplectic fit: they have sent for you: hasten to his assistance." The doctor dressed as fast as he could and went out. His wife, in her dressing gown, came with the duenna into the room where I was. They dragged me from under the table more dead than alive. "You have nothing to fear, Diego," said Mergelina; "recover yourself." And she told me in a few words what had happened. She then wished to renew with me the conversation which had been interrupted; but her companion set her

¹ This was the real name of one of the principal Madrid booksellers in the reign of Philip IV.

face against it. "Madam," she said, "your husband will perhaps find the bookseller dead, and may return immediately. Besides," she added, perceiving me to be paralyzed with fright, "what is to be done with that poor boy? He is not in a condition to carry on a conversation. It would be far better to send him home, and to defer the debate until tomorrow." Donna Mergelina did not consent to this without regret, so enamoured was she of the present; and I flatter myself she was greatly mortified in not having been able to bestow upon her doctor the new head-gear which she had intended for him.

As for me, less grieved to have missed the most precious favours of love than glad to be out of danger, I returned to my master's, where I spent the rest of the night reflecting on my adventure. I hesitated for some time whether I should keep the appointment for the following night. I had no better idea of the second expedition than of the first; but the devil, who is ever besetting us, or rather taking possession of us in such circumstances, whispered to me that I should be a great fool to stop half-way. He pictured to my fancy Mergelina adorned with new charms, and extolled the value of the pleasures which awaited me. I resolved to pursue my end; and promising myself to be firmer the next night, I went back thus well disposed, to the doctor's door, between

eleven and twelve. The sky was very dark; and not a star was to be seen. I mewed two or three times to give notice that I was in the street; and as no one came to let me in, I not only began again, but imitated all the various cat-calls a shepherd had taught me in Olmedo. I acquitted myself so well that a neighbour, who was coming home, taking me for one of the animals whose cries I was imitating, picked up a stone lying at his feet, and threw it at me with all his might, saying "curse the cat!" I received the blow on my head, and was so stunned for the moment that I had well nigh fallen. I felt that I was badly hurt. Nothing more was needed to disgust me with gallantry; and my love oozing out with my blood, I went back home, where I woke everybody, and made them get up. My master examined my wound, and dressed it, considering it a dangerous one. Nevertheless, it had no bad results, and was cured three weeks later. During all that time I heard nothing of Mergelina. It is likely enough that Dame Melancia, in order to wean her from me, introduced her to some better acquaintance. But I troubled myself little about that, for I left Madrid to continue my tour of Spain, as soon as I found myself thoroughly recovered.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW GIL BLAS AND HIS COMPANION MET A MAN WHO WAS SOAKING CRUSTS OF BREAD IN A SPRING; AND THE CONVERSATION THEY HAD WITH HIM.

SEÑOR Diego de la Fuente related to me several other adventures which had subsequently happened to him; but they seem to me so little worthy of being told, that I shall pass them by in silence.¹ I was, however, compelled to listen to the narrative, which was decidedly tedious; it lasted as far as Ponte de Duero. We stayed at this town for the remainder of the day. At the inn we ordered cabbage-soup, and a roasted hare, whose species we took the pains of verifying beforehand. At daybreak on the following morning we pursued our journey, after having filled our flask with a pretty good wine, and our wallet with some slices of bread, and half the hare remaining from our supper.

When we had gone about two leagues we felt appetised, and as we saw about two hundred yards from the highway a group of large trees forming a very pleasant shade, we

¹ This conveys an indirect censure of the Spanish novel, the *Life of Marcos d'Obregon*, from which Lesage borrowed the episode of the barber's amours with Mergelina.



resolved to break our journey at this spot. There we found a man from seven to eight-and-twenty, moistening some crusts of bread in a spring. By his side on the grass lay a long sword, with a knapsack which he had taken from his shoulders. He seemed to us ill-clad, but well made and good looking. We accosted him with civility ; and he returned our salute in the same fashion. He then offered us his crusts, and asked us with a smile if we would partake of his fare. We said we would, provided he would permit us to add our breakfast to his own, and so make the meal more substantial. He agreed most willingly, and we soon produced our victuals, which were not unacceptable to the stranger. "Why, gentlemen," he cried joyfully, "here is a fine stock of provisions ! I can see that you are provident men. For my part I travel without such forethought ; I leave a good deal to chance. However, in spite of the condition you find me in, I can say without boasting that I sometimes make a pretty brilliant figure. Would you believe it ; they generally treat me as a prince, and I have guards as my attendants ?" "I understand you," said Diego ; "you mean that you are an actor ?" "You have guessed it," replied the other ; "I have been an actor these fifteen years at least. I was but a child when I began to perform minor parts." "I must confess," said the barber, shaking his head, "that I can hardly believe

you. I know what actors are; those gentlemen do not travel on foot, as you are doing, nor dine with Saint Anthony;¹ I doubt if you are even a candle-snuffer." "You may think just what you please of me," replied the actor; "but for all that I play leading characters; I act the lover." "If that be the case," said my comrade, "I congratulate you; I am delighted that Señor Gil Blas and I have the honour of breakfasting with a gentleman of so much importance."

We then began to gnaw our crusts, and the precious remains of the hare, bestowing on the flask such hearty smacks that we very soon emptied it. We were all three so much taken up by what we were doing that we scarcely spoke during our meal; but after we had eaten we thus renewed the conversation.—"I am surprised," said the barber to the comedian, "that you seem to be so badly off. For a stage hero you appear very poor. Forgive me if I say frankly what I think." "Frankly!" cried the actor, "ah, indeed, you hardly know Melchior Zapata. Thank Heaven, I am not at all cross-tempered. You please me by speaking so frankly, for I also like to say all that is in my mind. I candidly admit I am not rich. Look," he continued, showing us his doublet lined with play-bills, "this is the stuff that generally serves me for

¹ To dine with Saint Anthony is to have only bread and water.

lining, and if you care to see my wardrobe I shall satisfy your curiosity." With this he drew from his knapsack a coat covered with old silver-foil lace, a small broad-brimmed hat,¹ with a few old feathers, silk stockings full of holes, and red morocco buskins a great deal the worse for wear. "You see," he said to us, "that I am poor enough." "That astonishes me," replied Diego. "So you have neither wife nor daughter?" "I have a young and pretty wife," said Zapata, "and I am none the better for it. Observe the fatality of my lot! I marry a lovely actress, in the hope that she would not let me die of hunger; and unfortunately she is incorruptibly good. Who the deuce would not have been deceived in her as I was? Amongst strolling actresses there is one who is virtuous, and she must fall into my hands!" "It is verily a piece of bad luck," said the barber. "But why did you not take an actress from the first company in Madrid? You would have been sure to be right." "I agree with you," replied the actor; "but, plague upon it, a petty strolling actor may not lift his thoughts to those illustrious heroines. That is as much as an actor even of the Prince's Company could do, and

¹ The original has *capeline*, from the Spanish *capellina*, a small broad-brimmed hat. Madame d'Aulnoy, in the twelfth letter of her *Relation du Voyage d'Espagne*, says that workmen wear small hats in Spain, whilst noblemen's hats are very large.

some of them have even to get mated to citizens' daughters. Fortunately for them, the town is well stored, and often there are found some who are quite as good as the princesses of the green room."

"Well! but have you never thought," asked my companion, "of getting into that company? Does it need an infinite amount of merit to get in?" "What!" replied Melchior, "are you joking with your infinite merit? There are a score of actors there. Ask the public what it thinks of them, and you will hear them spoken of in nice terms. More than half of them deserve still to be carrying a knapsack. Yet, for all that, it is not easy to be received amongst them. You must have coin, or powerful friends, to make up for poverty of talent. I ought to know, for I have just been coming out in Madrid, where I was hooted and hissed down like a fiend, though I ought to have been well applauded; for I roared and ranted in an extravagant manner, and departed from nature more than a hundred times; moreover I even clenched my fist at the heroine of the piece whilst saying my part; in a word, I acted just like the great performers of that town; and yet this self-same public which thought these ways very nice in them would not endure them in me. Such is the force of prejudice! So, unable to please by my acting, and having no means of being accepted in spite of the hissers,

I am on my way back to Zamora. There I shall rejoin my wife and my comrades, who are not doing too well. I only wish we may not be obliged to send the hat round, to enable us to get to another town, as we have had to do more than once ! ”

With these words the stage-prince rose, slung across him his knapsack and his sword, and said to us gravely as he departed :

“Gentlemen, farewell,
And may the gods exhaust their favours on you ! ”

“And may you find your wife in a different mood, and well established at Zamora,” said Diego, in the same tone. As soon as Señor Zapata had turned on his heels, he began gesticulating and spouting as he went along. Immediately the barber and I began to hiss, so as to remind him of his debut. Our hisses reached his ears; he thought he was listening to the cat-calls of Madrid, and looked behind him; and seeing that we were amusing ourselves at his expense, he was far from being offended at this buffoonery, but entered into the joke with a good grace, and went on his way laughing heartily. We, on our side, after we had echoed his mirth as boisterously, got again on the high road and pursued our journey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONDITION IN WHICH DIEGO FOUND HIS FAMILY;
AND HOW GIL BLAS AND HE SEPARATED, AFTER
GREAT REJOICINGS.

ON that day we slept between Moyados and Valpuesta,¹ at a little village whose name I have forgotten; and on the morrow we reached, about eleven in the morning, the plain of Olmedo. "Señor Gil Blas," said my companion, behold my native place; I can hardly contain myself when I see it, so natural is it to love one's country." "Señor Diego," I replied, "a man who shows so much love for his native country ought to speak of it a little more favourably, it seems to me, than you have done. Olmedo looks to me like a town, and you told me it was a village; you ought at least to have treated it as a market town." "I beg its pardon," replied the barber; "but I will tell you that, after seeing Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, and all the other great towns where I dwelt whilst making the tour of Spain, I regard the small ones as mere villages." As we got further on the plain it seemed to us that there was a crowd gathered near Olmedo; and when we were near enough to distinguish

¹ These names are rightly spelt by Lesage, though Llorente asserts the contrary.

objects clearly, we saw something to occupy our attention.

There were three tents pitched at some distance from each other ; and near them a large number of cooks and scullions preparing a feast. Some were laying the cloth on long tables set up under the tents ; others were filling earthenware pitchers with wine. Others, again, were making pots boil, whilst some turned spits on which were roasting all sorts of meats. But what I thought more curious than all the rest was a great stage which had been erected, adorned with painted pasteboard decorations in varied colours and covered with Greek and Latin mottoes. The barber had no sooner seen these inscriptions than he said to me : “ All these Greek words savour strongly of my uncle Thomas. I bet he has had a hand in them, for between ourselves he is a man of learning. He knows by heart a whole host of college books. What annoys me is that he is always quoting passages of them in his conversation, which does not please everybody. Besides,” he continued, “ my uncle has translated Latin poets and Greek authors. He has got all the ancient authors at his fingers’ ends, as you may see by his ingenious criticisms. If it had not been for him we might never have known that, in the city of Athens, children cried when they were whipped. We owe this discovery to his profound erudition.”

After my companion and I had looked at the things I have mentioned, we wished to learn the cause of such preparations. We were going to inquire, when, in a man who seemed to be the manager of the festivities, Diego recognised Señor Thomas de la Fuente, whom we accosted with great eagerness. The schoolmaster did not at first recognise the young barber, so much was he changed in ten years. However, he did not long fail to remember him, but embraced him cordially, and said to him affectionately: "Well, Diego, my dear nephew, so you have returned to the town where you first saw the light? You have come back to revisit your household gods, and Heaven restores you safe and sound to your family. O day thrice and four times happy! *albo dies notanda lapillo!* We have news in plenty for you, my dear lad," he continued, "your uncle Pedro, the wit, has become a victim to Pluto; he has been dead these three months. That miser, during his life, was afraid of being in want of the common necessities: *argenti pallescebat amore*. Though he received large pensions from several noblemen, he did not spend ten pistoles a year on his maintenance, and had only one attendant, whom he starved. That crazy fellow, madder than the Greek Aristippus—who ordered all the riches which his slaves carried, to be thrown into the midst of the Libyan desert, because they were an encumbrance on their march,

—heaped up all the gold and silver which he could scrape together. And for whom? For those very heirs whom he would not admit to his presence. He died worth thirty thousand ducats, which your father, your uncle Bertrand, and myself have divided. We are in a position to make our children comfortable. My brother Nicholas has already disposed of your sister Theresa, and just married her to the son of one of our alcades; *Connubio junxit stabili propriamque dicavit*. It is this very wedding, performed under the happiest auspices, which we have been celebrating for two days with so much display. We have had these tents set up in the plain. The three heirs of Pedro have each a booth and alternately bear the expenses of the day. I wish you had come earlier; you would have seen the beginning of our rejoicings. The day before yesterday, when the marriage took place, your father gave his treat. He provided a sumptuous entertainment which was followed by a tilt at the ring. Your uncle, the mercer, regaled us yesterday, and treated us to a pastoral feast. He dressed ten of the best looking lads and maidens as shepherds and shepherdesses, and used up all the ribbons and all the points in his shop to adorn them. This brilliant youthful company performed several dances, and sang a thousand tender and sprightly songs. And yet, though nothing was ever more gallant, it produced no

great effect. People now-a-days do not care so much for pastorals as they once did. To-day," he continued, "all goes on at my cost, and I am about to give the townsfolk of Olmedo a spectacle of my own devising: *Finis coronabit opus*. I have had a stage set up, whereon, God willing, shall be represented by my pupils a piece of my own composition: *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf, King of Morocco*. It will be thoroughly well acted, because I have pupils who declaim like the actors of Madrid. They are children of decent families of Pegnafiel and Segovia, who are boarding with me. They are capital actors! To be sure, I have trained them; and their declamation will bear the stamp of the master, *ut ita dicam*. As for the piece, I will not say a word about it, but leave to you the pleasure of surprise. I will merely state that it must produce a deep impression on all who behold it. It is one of those tragic subjects which move the soul by the pictures of death which they present to the mind. I am of Aristotle's opinion; we must excite terror. Ah, if I had cultivated the drama, I should have put on the stage none but sanguinary princes, but murderous heroes; I should have bathed in gore. In my tragedies not only the principal personages, but also the guards should have been killed off; I should have even slaughtered the prompter; in fact I

only care for the terrible:¹ that is my taste. Plays of this kind draw the masses, support the players in splendour, and enable authors to live at their ease."

Just as he was finishing his speech, we saw emerging from the village and entering upon the plain a great crowd of persons of both sexes. It was the newly married couple, accompanied by their relatives and friends, and preceded by ten or a dozen musicians, who, playing all together, produced a very noisy din. We went forward to meet them, and Diego made himself known. The whole assembly immediately shouted for joy, and everyone pressed forward to shake him by the hand. He had enough to do to accept all the overtures of friendship which were made to him. His whole family, and even all who were present, overwhelmed him with embraces, after which his father said to him: "You are welcome, Diego! you find your parents in rather better circumstances, my lad; I do not say more at present, I shall explain all by and by." Meanwhile everybody advanced along the plain, went into the tents, and sat down round the tables which had been prepared. I kept close to

¹ A hit at Crébillon whose tragedy *Atrée et Thyeste* had been acted in 1707, his *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* in 1711. Crébillon is said to have stated as the reason of his preference for the terrible, "that Corneille had already taken Heaven for the subject of his plays, Racine the earth, and that therefore only the infernal regions remained for him."

my companion, and we dined with the newly-married couple, who seemed to me well matched. The meal was rather long, because the schoolmaster had the vanity of wishing to give three courses, so as to outshine his brothers who had not been so magnificent in their hospitalities.

After the banquet all the guests showed great impatience to witness the representation of Señor Thomas's play, not doubting, as they said, that the production of such a fine genius would well deserve to be heard. We drew near the stage, in front of which all the musicians had already taken their seats, so as to play in the intervals. Whilst all, amidst deep silence, were waiting for the rising of the curtain, the actors appeared upon the stage, and the author, with the piece in his hand, sat behind the scenes to prompt. He was right when he told us that the play was tragical; for, in the first act, the King of Morocco, by way of recreation, slew a hundred Moorish slaves with bow and arrow; in the second he cut off the heads of thirty Portuguese officers, whom one of his captains had made prisoners of war; and in the third and last, this monarch, tired of his wives, set fire with his own hand to a detached palace in which they were shut up, and reduced it and them to ashes. The Moorish slaves, as well as the Portuguese officers, were wicker-work figures constructed with much skill; and the

palace, which was of cardboard, seemed all in a blaze by fireworks. This conflagration, accompanied by a thousand piercing cries which seemed to proceed from the midst of the flames, brought the piece to a close in a very diverting manner. The whole plain resounded with the applause bestowed on so fine a tragedy, which testified to the sound taste of the poet, and showed that he knew well how to choose his subjects.

I thought there was nothing more to be seen after *The Amusements of Muley Bugentuf*, but I was mistaken. Kettle-drums and trumpets announced a new spectacle. This was the distribution of prizes; for Thomas de la Fuente, to give additional solemnity to the feast, had made all his scholars, day pupils and boarders, compose certain themes; and to-day he was to give to those who had succeeded best some books bought at Segovia, out of his own pocket. Immediately, therefore, there were brought on to the stage two long school formes, with a case filled with handsomely bound books. Then all the actors returned upon the scene, and gathered round Señor Thomas, who looked as pompous as the principal of a college. He had in his hand a sheet of paper, whereon were written the names of all those who had carried off prizes. He gave the list to the King of Morocco, who began to read it aloud. Each pupil, answering to his name, went up respect-

fully to receive a book from the schoolmaster's hands; after this he was crowned with laurel, and made to sit on one of the two formes to exhibit himself to the gaze of an admiring audience. However, much as the schoolmaster desired to send the spectators away in good humour, he did not succeed; for, having distributed nearly all the prizes to the boarders—as is generally the case,—the mothers of some of the day-boys fired up and accused him of partiality; so that this entertainment, which had thus far been so glorious for him, had nearly ended in mischief, like the feast of the Lapithæ.

BOOK III.

I.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL OF GIL BLAS IN MADRID, AND HIS FIRST PLACE IN THAT CITY.

I STAYED for some time at the young barber's. Then I joined a shopkeeper of Segovia, who was passing through Olmedo with four mules, which had taken certain goods to Valladolid, and was returning with them unloaded. We became well acquainted on the road, and he took such a fancy to me that he insisted on my lodging with him when we arrived at Segovia. He kept me for two days, and when he saw that I was ready to start with the muleteer for Madrid, he entrusted me with a letter, asking me to deliver it at its address in person, without telling me that it was a letter of recommendation. I did not fail to take it to Señor Matheo Melendez. He was a woollen-draper, living at the Sun Gate, at the corner of the Trunkmaker's Street.¹ He had no sooner opened the letter and read it than he said to me graciously: "Señor Gil Blas, my correspondent, Pedro Palacio, writes to me so urgently in your favour that I cannot

¹ Llorente says there is no such street, but Everett states that there is one, as well as a *Puerta del Sol*.

but offer you a lodging at my house. Moreover, he asks me to find you a good situation. It is a commission which I shall undertake with pleasure, and I am sure it will not be very difficult to settle you comfortably."

I accepted the offer of Melendez with the more pleasure that my finances were visibly decreasing; but I did not live long at his expense. At the end of a week he told me that he had just recommended me to a gentleman of his acquaintance who needed a *valet de chambre*, and that, in all probability, I should not fail in obtaining the situation. And indeed, the gentleman happening to arrive at the same moment, Melendez said to him, whilst introducing me, "Señor, you see before you the young man I mentioned to you. He is an honest lad and has a good character. I can answer for him as I would for myself." The gentleman looked at me attentively, said that my face pleased him, and that he would take me into his service. "He has but to follow me," he added; "I shall tell him what his duties are." He then wished the shopkeeper good day, and took me into the High-street, just in front of the church of St Philip. We entered a rather handsome house, of which he occupied one wing. We went up five or six steps, and then he took me into a room closed by two strong doors, which he opened, and the first of which had a small window,

with an iron grate to it, in the middle. Through this room we passed into another, where there was a bed, and a few other articles of furniture rather more neat than expensive.

If my master had looked at me well at the house of Melendez, I examined him in turn with much attention. He was a man on the wrong side of fifty, reserved and grave in appearance. He seemed to me of a gentle disposition, and I did not misjudge him. He asked me several questions concerning my family, and being satisfied with my replies, said: "Gil Blas, I think you are a very sensible young fellow; I am very glad to have you in my service. On your part you will be satisfied with your place. I shall give you six reals a day for your board and wages, without counting the little perquisites you may make in my establishment. Besides, I am not difficult to serve, for I have no regular meals here, but dine in town. In the morning you will only have to brush my clothes, and you will be your own master for the rest of the day. Only take care to get back early in the evening, and to wait for me at the door. This is all I want of you." After thus instructing me in my duties he took six reals out of his pocket and gave me them, by way of beginning to carry out the terms. We then went out together. He closed the doors himself, and took away the keys. "Youngster," he said, "you need not follow me: go where you

like, walk about in the town ; but when I come back in the evening, let me find you on these stairs." With this injunction he left me to do what I chose with myself.

"Upon my word, Gil Blas," I soliloquised, "you could not have found a better master. Why, you have come across a man who, for brushing his clothes and putting his room straight in the morning, gives you six reals a day, with the liberty of walking about and pleasing yourself like a school-boy in the holidays ! Od's life, there could not be a better place ! No wonder I wanted so much to come to Madrid ; I certainly had a presentiment of the good luck that awaited me." I spent the day about the streets, amusing myself by looking at all that was new to me, which occupied me for a while. In the evening, after supping at an inn not far from our house, I went in good time to the spot where my master had ordered me to be. He came three quarters of an hour after me, and seemed pleased with my punctuality. "That's all right," said he, "and pleases me. I like servants who attend to their duties." With this he opened the doors of his room, and closed them after us as soon as we had entered. As we were without a light he took a tinder-box and lighted a candle, and then I helped him to undress. As soon as he was in bed I lighted, by his order, a lamp on the mantelpiece, and

took the candle into the outer room, where I had to sleep in a little bed without curtains. He got up next morning between nine and ten; I brushed his clothes; he gave me my six reals, and sent me away until the evening. He also went out, not without very carefully locking the doors; and so we separated for the remainder of the day.

Such was our manner of living, which I found very pleasant. The most amusing part of it was that I did not know my master's name. Melendez himself did not know it. He was only acquainted with the gentleman from his coming occasionally into the shop, and now and then buying some cloth. Our neighbours were as much at a loss as myself; they all assured me that my master was a perfect stranger to them, though he had been living for two years in the ward. They told me that he visited no one in the neighbourhood; and some, accustomed to form rash judgments, concluded from this that he was a man no better than he should be. They even went further; they suspected him of being a spy of the king of Portugal, and charitably advised me to take my measures accordingly. This intimation troubled me. I imagined that, if this fact should turn out to be true, I ran the risk of seeing the inside of the prisons of Madrid, which I did not believe to be any better than others. My innocence could not

allay my anxiety. My past misfortunes made me dread the law. I had twice experienced that, if it did not slay the innocent, it at least observed so badly the laws of hospitality towards them that it was always a misfortune to sojourn under its roof.

In such a delicate conjuncture I consulted Melendez. He was at a loss how to advise me. If he could not bring himself to believe that my master was a spy, still he had no reason to be very positive of the contrary. I resolved to watch my employer, and to leave him if I saw that he was really an enemy of the State; but it seemed to me that prudence and my comfortable situation required me first to be perfectly sure of the fact. I therefore began to pry into his actions, and in order to sound him I said to him one evening as I was undressing him: "Sir, I do not know how a man ought to live so as to be safe against slanderous attacks. People are very scurrilous! We, like other men, have neighbours not worth a curse, and who are evil-minded! You could never guess how they talk of us." "Indeed, Gil Blas," he replied. "Well, what can they say of us, my lad?" "Ah, truly," I rejoined, "scandal never lacks a subject; virtue herself would supply it with a handle. Our neighbours say that we are dangerous people, and ought to be looked after by the government; in a word, you are taken, hereabouts, for a spy of the

king of Portugal.”¹ As I uttered these words I looked at my master as Alexander eyed his physician, and summoned up all my penetration to read the effect that my remark produced on him. I thought I observed a tremor in my master which too well accorded with the conjectures of the neighbourhood, and he fell into a fit of musing which I did not interpret favourably. He, however, recovered from his emotion, and said to me calmly enough: “Gil Blas, leave our neighbours to discuss us as they please, but let us not make our peace depend on their discussions. We need not trouble about their opinion of us, if we give them no cause for a bad one.”

Thereupon he went to bed, and I did the same, not knowing well what to do. Next day, just as we were on the point of going out in the morning, we heard a loud knocking at the outer door, on the staircase. My master opened the inner door, and looked through the little grating. He saw a well-dressed man, who said to him: “Sir, I am an alguazil,² and

¹ There was no king of Portugal at the time when Gil Blas was supposed to speak, for the Duke of Alba had conquered that country for Philip II. of Spain in 1580.

² The Countess d'Aulnoy had no great opinion of the Madrid alguazils. In the twelfth letter of her *Relation* she calls them “the greatest robbers out,” and says that, “by giving some money to an alcalde or an alguazil, the most innocent person in the world can be arrested, and thrown into a dungeon to perish there of hunger, without any preliminary lawsuit, order, or decree, and when he

I have come to tell you that the corregidor desires to speak to you." "What does he want with me?" asked my master. "That I do not know, sir," replied the alguazil; "but you have only to go to him, and you will soon be informed." "Present my compliments," said my master, "and tell him I have no business with him." Whilst uttering these words he sharply closed the second door; then, after walking up and down for some time, as though the alguazil's words had given him plenty of food for thought, he put six reals into my hand, and said: "Gil Blas, you may go out, my lad, and spend the day where you like. I shall not leave here just yet, and do not need you this morning." By this he led me to understand that he was afraid of being arrested, and was therefore obliged to remain in his apartments. I left him there, and to discover if I were mistaken in my suspicions, I concealed myself in a place where I could see him if he went out. I should have had the patience to stay there all the morning, if he had not saved me the trouble. But an hour later I saw him walking in the street with an air of confidence which at first puzzled my penetration. And yet, far from being taken in by appearances, I distrusted them; for I was strongly prejudiced against him. I con-

comes out of prison he must not even think of bringing to book such an unworthy officer of justice."

sidered that his air of assurance might be affected; I even fancied that he only stayed at home to secure his gold and jewels, and that probably he was about to consult his safety by a speedy flight. I thought I should never see him again, and hesitated in the evening about going to attend at his door, so convinced was I that he would leave the town that very day to escape from impending danger. Nevertheless, I did wait at his door; and to my surprise my master came back as usual. He went to bed without displaying the least anxiety, and got up the next morning with the same composure.

As he was finishing dressing there was a sudden knocking at the door. My master looked through the little grating, recognised the alguazil of the previous day, and asked him what he wanted. "Open the door," the alguazil said, "the corregidor is here." At this alarming name my blood froze in my veins. I was deucedly afraid of those gentry since I had been in their clutches, and could have wished myself at that moment a hundred leagues from Madrid. As for my master, he was less startled than I was, opened the door and received the magistrate respectfully. "You see," the corregidor said, "that I have not come to you with a large following; I want to do business without exposure. In spite of the damaging rumours circulated about you in the town, I think you deserve

some consideration. Tell me your name, and your business in Madrid. "Señor," replied my master, "I am a native of New Castille, and my name is Don Bernard de Castil Blazo.¹ As for my occupations, I walk about, frequent places of public amusement, and enjoy myself every day with a few nice acquaintances." "Of course," remarked the magistrate, "you have a large income?" "No, sir," my master interrupted, "I have neither annuities, lands, nor houses." "Then what do you live on?" rejoined the corregidor. "On what I will show you," replied Don Bernard. At the same time he lifted up some hangings, opened a door, which I had not previously observed, then another behind this one, and took the magistrate to a closet containing a large chest full of golden coins which he showed him.

"Señor," he then continued, "you know that Spaniards do not like to work; yet whatever aversion they may have to taking any trouble, I can safely say I excel them in that respect. I possess a stock of laziness which renders me incapable of any exertion. If I wanted to transform my vices into virtues I might call my laziness philosophic indolence; I might say that it is the labour of a mind weaned from all that worldlings pursue most ardently; but I

¹ This, according to Llorente, ought to be "Castil-Blanco, a village in the Mancha, in New Castille." I have, however, found Castil Blazo on the maps I consulted.

will frankly confess that I am constitutionally lazy, and so lazy that, rather than work for my living, I believe I would prefer to starve. So, to lead a life in accordance with my mood, not to have the trouble of managing my property, and, above all, to get rid of stewards, I have converted all my patrimony, consisting of several considerable estates, into ready money. In this chest are fifty thousand ducats. It is more than enough for the remainder of my life, even if I were to live upwards of a century; for I do not spend a thousand ducats a year, and I am already more than fifty. Hence I do not dread the future, for, thank Heaven, I am not given to any of the three things which usually ruin men. I do not care much for good living, I only play for amusement, and I have given up women. There is no chance of my being reckoned in my old age one of those libidinous dotards to whom light of loves¹ sell their favours at an extravagant price."

"You are a happy man!" the corregidor said to him; "and those people are wrong

¹ The original has *coquette*. The older French writers sometimes employed the word *coquette* as a stronger term than *galante*. Molière applied it thus: In *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (act ii., sc. 4), Sbrigani, in speaking of the character of Julia, Oronte's daughter, says: "The word *galante* again, seems not enough; that of consummate *coquette* appears to me to serve our purpose." Lesage seems to use *coquette* here with the meaning of Molière. However, in Le Roux's *Dictionnaire Comique, Satirique, etc.*, new edition, 1735, it is stated that "*une femme ou fille peut être un peu coquette, sans encourir le blâme.*"

who suspect you of being a spy: such profession is quite out of character for a man like you. Continue, Don Bernard," he added, "to go on living as you do. Far from wishing to trouble your peaceful life, I declare myself your protector; I ask for your friendship and offer you mine." "Ah! Señor," exclaimed my master, touched by these obliging words, "I accept the precious offer you have made me with as much joy as respect. In granting me your friendship, you increase my wealth, and crown my happiness." After this conversation, which the alguazil and I overheard from the closet door, the corregidor took his leave of Don Bernard, who could not sufficiently attest his gratitude. For my part, to second my master, and help him to do the honours of his house, I overwhelmed the alguazil with civilities; I made him a thousand low bows, although, from the bottom of my heart, I felt for him the scorn and aversion which every honest man naturally entertains for an alguazil.

CHAPTER II.

HOW GIL BLAS TO HIS ASTONISHMENT MET CAPTAIN
ROLANDO IN MADRID, AND THE CURIOUS THINGS
THIS ROBBER RELATED TO HIM.

DON BERNARD DE CASTIL BLAZO, after having seen the corregidor to the street-door, came back quickly to close his strong box, and all the doors which secured it. Then we both went out in a very good temper, he at having acquired a powerful friend, and I at being assured of my six reals a day. The desire of relating this occurrence to Melendez made me turn my steps towards his house, when, as I was about to enter it, whom should I meet but Captain Rolando. My surprise at seeing him was extreme, and I could not help quaking at the sight of him. He recognised me too, accosted me gravely, and still maintaining his air of superiority, bade me follow him. I obeyed, trembling, and said to myself: "Alas, he no doubt means to make me pay him all I owe. Whither is he going to take me? Perhaps he has got an underground cavern in this town! Plague upon it! if I thought so, I would soon let him see I have no gout in my feet." So I walked behind him, carefully looking out where he might stop, quite

resolved to take to my heels if he led me to a place which should seem the least suspicious.

Rolando soon dispersed my fears. He went into a celebrated tavern, and I followed him. He called for the best wine, and told the landlord to prepare dinner for us. Whilst it was getting ready we went into a private room, where the Captain, seeing that we were alone, spoke as follows:—"Gil Blas, you may well be astonished to see again your old captain, and you will be still more so after you have heard my tale. On the day when I left you in the cave, and went with my men to Mansilla to sell the mules and horses we had taken the evening before, we met the son of the corregidor of Leon, accompanied by four men on horseback, well armed, who were following his carriage. We made two of these men bite the dust, and the other two fled. Then the coachman, fearing for his master, cried out in beseeching tones: 'O! my dear gentlemen, in the name of Heaven, do not kill the only son of the corregidor of Leon? These words did not soften my men; on the contrary, their fury knew no bounds. 'Gentlemen,' said one of them, 'we must not permit the son of the greatest enemy of our brotherhood to escape. How many men of our profession has his father put to death! Let us avenge them, let us sacrifice this victim to their ashes, which seem at this moment to demand it.' The whole

troop applauded this sentiment, and my lieutenant was even making ready to act as high-priest in this sacrifice, when I held his hand. 'Stop,' I said to him, 'why shed blood without necessity? Let us be satisfied with this young man's purse. As he does not resist, it would be barbarous to kill him. Besides, he is not responsible for his father's actions, and his father only does his duty when he condemns us to death, as we do ours in robbing travellers.' Thus I interceded for the son of the corregidor, and my intercession was not in vain. We merely took all the money he had, and carried off with us the horses of the two men whom we had slain. We sold them with those that we were taking to Mansilla. Then we returned to the cave, where we arrived the following morning, a few minutes before dawn. We were not a little surprised to find the trap-door open, and our surprise became still greater when we saw Leonarda bound in the kitchen. She told us all in a few words. The remembrance of your colic made us laugh; we admired the way you had deceived us; we never thought you capable of playing such a clever trick, and we pardoned you for the sake of the stratagem. As soon as we had unbound the cook, I ordered her to get us some food ready. Meanwhile we went to look after our horses in the stable, where the old negro, who had been left to himself for four-and-twenty

hours, was at death's door. We tried to succour him, but he had lost consciousness; and he seemed to us so reduced that, in spite of our endeavours, we left the poor devil between life and death. That did not prevent us sitting down to table; and after having amply breakfasted we retired to our rooms, where we slept away the remainder of the day. When we woke Leonarda told us that Domingo was no longer alive. We carried him into the vault where you may remember you used to sleep, and there we buried him, as though he had had the honour of being one of our own order.

“Five or six days afterwards it happened that one morning as we were starting on an expedition we met, just outside the wood, three companies of troops of the Holy Brotherhood, who seemed as though they were waiting to attack us. We only saw one troop at first, and despised them, though they were superior in numbers. We attacked them; but while we were engaged with them the two other troops, who had contrived to remain concealed, suddenly came and fell on us, so that our valour was useless. We were obliged to yield to so many enemies. Our lieutenant and two of our men died on this occasion. The other two and myself¹ were surrounded, and so

¹ The original troop of robbers only consisted of eight men besides Cil Blas (see book i., chaps. iii. and iv.), of whom one was killed in the attack on Don Alvar de Mello. (See book i. chap. ix.)

closely pressed that we were taken prisoners ; and whilst two detachments conducted us to Leon, the third went to destroy our retreat, which had been discovered in the way I will tell you. A peasant of Luceno, passing through the forest on his way home, happened to espy the trap-door of our cave which you had not closed after you, for this happened on the very day when you left with the lady. He suspected that it must be our dwelling, but had not the courage to enter, and satisfied himself with taking notice of the spot. The better to mark it he slightly notched with his knife the bark from a few of the neighbouring trees, and so on at intervals, until he was quite out of the wood. Then he betook himself to Leon, in order to impart his discovery to the corregidor, who was the more rejoiced at it as his son had just been robbed by our band. This magistrate collected three companies to arrest us, and the peasant was their guide.

“ My arrival in the town of Leon was a great event for the inhabitants. If I had been a Portuguese general, taken prisoner in war, the people could not have been more eager to see me.¹ ‘ There he is,’ they said, ‘ there he is ; the famous captain, the terror of these parts ! He deserves to be torn limb from limb

¹ At the time when Rolando is supposed to be speaking there was no war between Portugal and Spain ; the two kingdoms were jointly ruled by Philip II.

with red-hot pincers, and so do his two comrades.' We were taken before the corregidor, who began to insult me. 'Well, wretch,' said he, 'Heaven, weary with your irregularities, delivers you over to justice!' " "Señor," I replied, "great as my crimes may have been, at least I have not the death of your only son to reproach myself with; I saved his life, for which you owe me some gratitude." 'Ah, villain,' he cried, 'ought fellows of your sort to be treated with generosity? And even if I were willing to save you, the duties of my office would not allow me to indulge my feelings.' After saying these words he ordered us to be cast into a dungeon, where he did not let my companions linger long. They were taken out at the end of three days to play a tragic part in the market place. As for me, I remained a good three weeks in prison. I thought my punishment was being delayed only to make it more terrible, and expected in the end some novel mode of being put to death, when the corregidor, having ordered me to be brought into his presence, said to me: 'Listen to your sentence! You are free. But for you, my only son would have been murdered on the highway. As a father I was willing to show my gratitude for this service; but as a magistrate I was not able to acquit you; I, therefore, wrote to the court on your behalf, solicited your pardon, and have

obtained it. Go, then, wherever you please. But,' he added, 'take my advice, and profit by this fortunate occurrence. Reflect seriously on your past life, and give up brigandage for ever.'

"I was deeply impressed by these words, and I departed for Madrid, resolved to mend my ways, and to settle down quietly in that city. Here I found that my father and mother were dead, and that their property was in the hands of an old relative, who gave me a faithful account of it, as all guardians do. I could only recover three thousand ducats, which was perhaps not a fourth of what I was entitled to. But what could I do? I should gain nothing by going to law. To avoid being idle, I have purchased an alguazil's place, of which I discharge the duties as though I had never done anything else in my life. My brother officers might have opposed my admission, for the honour of the cloth, had they known my history. Fortunately they were ignorant of it, or pretended to be, which is the same thing; for in this honourable body, every one has an interest in concealing his performances. Thank Heaven, we have no cause to reproach one another! The deuce is welcome to the best! However," my friend, Rolando continued, "I will now disclose to you my inmost thoughts. The profession which I have chosen is hardly to my taste; it requires

a man to be too circumspect and too mysterious in his conduct. You can practise nothing in it, except secret and crafty deceptions. O! I regret my former way of life! I confess the new one is safer; but there is more pleasure in the old, and I like liberty. I have a good mind to get rid of my place, and to set off some fine morning for the mountains at the source of the Tagus.¹ I know thereabout of a retreat, inhabited by a numerous band, many of them Catalonians;² and when I have said that I need say no more. If you will accompany me, we shall go and swell the number of these illustrious men. I shall be second in command; and, to assure you a good reception, I shall pledge my word that I have seen you fight ten times by my side. I shall extol your valour to the skies and say more good of you than a general says of an officer he wants to get promoted. I shall take care not to mention the trick you played; that would draw suspicion on you; I shall hold my

¹ In Colmenar's *Les Délices de l'Espagne*, vol. i. p. 32 (see INTRODUCTORY NOTICE), it is stated: "In the south of Spain, below Moncayo, this mountain (the Sierra d'Occa) forms another branch which is called Mount Orospeida. It rises gradually, and takes the name of Sierra Molina, close to which the Tagus takes its rise."

² The Catalonians fought for a long time for their liberties, so that their courage had become proverbial. Colmenar, in the third volume of *Les Délices de l'Espagne*, p. 631, says, "The Catalonians are bold, courageous, active, vigorous, and good soldiers, but rather mutinous."

tongue about that adventure. And now, tell me," he added, "are you ready to follow me? I wait for your answer."

"Each to his own liking," I said in my turn to Rolando. "You are born for bold enterprises, and I for a quiet and tranquil life." "I understand you," he broke in; "the lady whom love induced you to carry off still rules your heart, and no doubt you are living in Madrid the quiet life that you prefer. Confess, Master Gil Blas, that you have furnished a house for her, and that you are living together on the pistoles you carried off from the cave." I assured him that he was mistaken, and to disabuse him offered to tell him the story of this lady, while we were at dinner. This I did, and I also told him all that had happened to me since I left the band. When our meal was finished he brought me back to the subject of the Catalonians. He even admitted that he had resolved to go and join them, and renewed his attempt to persuade me to take the same course. But, seeing that he could not talk me over, he suddenly changed his countenance and his voice, looked at me fiercely, and said in a very serious tone: "Since you have a soul mean enough to prefer your servile condition to the honour of entering a company of brave men, I abandon you to the baseness of your inclinations. But pay heed to the words I am going to say; let them sink into your memory.

Forget our meeting to-day, and never prate about me to any one; for if I learn that you bring my name up in your conversation . . . you know me; I need not say more." Having thus expressed himself he called the landlord, paid the reckoning, and we got up from the table to depart.

CHAPTER III.

GIL BLAS IS DISMISSED BY DON BERNARD DE CASTIL BLAZO, AND ENTERS INTO THE SERVICE OF A BEAU.

As we were coming out of the tavern, and were taking leave of each other, my master passed down the street. He saw me, and I perceived him look at the captain more than once. I concluded that he was surprised to see me with such a man. It is certain that Rolando's looks were not prepossessing. He was very tall, had a long face, and a hooked nose; and though he was not bad looking, bore the stamp of rascality.

I was not mistaken in my conjectures. In the evening I found Don Bernard harping on the captain's appearance, and quite in a mood to believe all the fine things I could have told him, if I had dared to speak. "Gil Blas," he

said, "who was that tall, ungainly fellow whom I saw you with just now?" I replied that he was an alguazil, and fancied he would be satisfied with this reply; but he put many other questions to me and as I seemed embarrassed, because I remembered the threats of Rolando, he suddenly brought the conversation to a close, and went to bed. The next morning, when I had performed my usual duties, he gave me six ducats instead of six reals, and said to me: "There, friend, that is what I give you for serving me up to this day. Go and look out for another place; I cannot keep a servant who has such fine acquaintances." It occurred to me to tell him, for my justification, that I knew this alguazil through having prescribed for him in Valladolid, whilst I was practising there as a physician. "Very well," replied my master, "the excuse is ingenious; you should have told me that last night, and not have been disconcerted." "Sir," I replied, "the fact is I thought it better not to tell you it, from a motive of prudence; that is what caused my embarrassment." "Verily," he replied, tapping me lightly on the shoulder, "that was very discreet! I did not think you were so sharp. Go, my lad, I dismiss you; a young fellow who has dealings with alguazils is not at all to my taste."

I went immediately to acquaint Melendez with this bad news; and he said, to console

me, that he would get me into a better place. Indeed, a few days later, he said to me: "Gil Blas, my friend, you little think what good luck is in store for you. You shall have the most comfortable situation in the world. I am going to place you with Don Mathias de Silva. He is a man of the highest rank, one of those young noblemen whom we call beaux. I have the honour to supply him with goods; he buys his cloth from me—on credit, it is true; but we lose nothing with these lords, for they often marry rich heiresses who pay their debts; and should that fail, a tradesman who understands his business always sells to them at such a high price that he loses nothing if but a fourth of his accounts are paid. The steward of Don Mathias," he continued, "is my intimate friend. Let us go to him. He shall himself present you to his master, and you may rely upon it that, for my sake, he will treat you with much consideration.

As we walked along to the house of Don Mathias, the tradesman said to me: "I think it is as well that you should learn what sort of a man the steward is, that you may act accordingly. His name is Gregorio Rodriguez. Between ourselves, he is a man of no birth, who, feeling himself born for business, followed his bent, and has grown rich as steward of two families, which have come to ruin. I warn you he is very vain; he likes to see the other

servants fawning on him. They must apply to him first if they have the slightest favour to ask of their master; for should they happen to obtain it without his mediation, he always contrives to get the favour recalled, or rendered of no avail. Regulate your conduct by that, Gil Blas. Pay court to Señor Rodriguez, rather than to your master himself, and do all you can to please him. His friendship will be very useful to you. He will pay your wages punctually, and if you are clever enough to win his confidence, he may give you some little bone to pick. He has so many of them! Don Mathias is a young nobleman who thinks only of his pleasures, and who will take no trouble whatever about his own affairs. What a house for a steward!"

When we arrived at the house we asked to speak to Señor Rodriguez. We were told that we should find him in his room. There sure enough, he was, and with him a man who seemed to be a peasant, holding a blue canvas bag, full of money. The steward, who seemed to me paler and yellower than a girl tired of her celibacy, came up to Melendez, with open arms. The tradesman, on the other hand, stretched out his own, and they embraced each other with demonstrations of friendship which were as much indebted to art as to nature. After that, I was brought forward. Rodriguez looked at me from top to toe. Then he said

to me very civilly that I was just the person to suit Don Mathias, and that he would with pleasure undertake to present me to his lordship. Thereupon Melendez gave him to understand how deeply he was interested in me. He begged the steward to grant me his protection, and left me with him, after many compliments. As soon as he was gone, Rodriguez said to me: "I shall take you to my master the moment I have sent this honest countryman away." Then he went up to the peasant, and, taking his bag, said: "*Talego*,¹ let us see if the five hundred pistoles are all right." He himself counted the coins, found their number correct, gave the farmer a receipt for the sum, sent him away, and put again the money into the bag. Then, addressing me he said: "Now we can go to my master. He generally gets up about noon, it is nearly one o'clock; he must be stirring now."

In fact, Don Mathias had just risen. He was still in his dressing-gown, reclining in an easy-chair, having one leg stretched over one of the arms, swinging backwards and forwards, manufacturing his own snuff,² and talking to a footman, his *valet de chambre* for the time being, who stood ready to wait on him. "My lord," the steward said to him,

¹ *Talego* is the Spanish for "money-bag."

² It was still the fashion when Lesage wrote *Gil Blas*, for every snuff-taker to prepare in the morning the supply of the day.

“here is a young man whom I take the liberty of presenting to you to fill the place of the one you sent away the day before yesterday. Melendez, the draper with whom you deal, recommends him; he assures him to be a meritorious lad, and I believe you will be satisfied with him.” “That is enough,” replied the young lord; “as you have introduced him to me, I will receive him into my service without any further inquiries. I appoint him my *valet de chambre*, so that business is settled. Rodriguez,” he added, “let us talk of something else. You come opportunely, I was going to send for you. I have bad news for you, my dear Rodriguez; I had a run of ill luck last night, and, besides, a hundred pistoles I had in my pocket, lost two hundred more on parole. You know how important it is for people of rank to discharge this kind of debt. It is really the only one which honour obliges us to pay punctually. And, indeed, we do not pay the others very punctually. So you must find two hundred pistoles at once, and send them to the Countess de Pedrosa.” “My lord,” said the steward, “that is easier said than done. Where, if you please, am I to get this sum? I cannot get a farthing from your tenants, however much I threaten them. Meanwhile, I have to keep up your establishment in style, and toil and moil to meet your expenditure. It is true that hitherto, Heaven be praised!

I have managed it; but at present I do not know which way to turn; I am at my wits end." "What is the good of all this talk?" Don Mathias broke in; "these details only weary me. Don't imagine, Rodriguez, that I am going to change my conduct, and divert myself by looking after my property. A nice pastime that would be for a man of pleasure like myself." "Only wait a little while," replied the steward; "and at the rate things are going on, I can see that you will soon be rid of that trouble for ever." "You bore me," exclaimed the young lord peevishly, "you are killing me. Let me ruin myself without knowing it. I tell you I must have two hundred pistoles; I must have them." "Then," said Rodriguez, "we must have recourse to that little old man who has already lent you money at such a high rate of interest?" "Go to the devil, if you like," answered Don Mathias; "so long as I have the two hundred pistoles, I don't care."

While he was uttering these words, hastily and in a fretful tone, the steward left the room; and a young nobleman, Don Antonio de Centelles,¹ came in. "What is the matter, my friend?" he asked my master. "You look gloomy; there is anger in your face. Who can have put you into such a bad humour? I will lay a wager it is that rascal who just

¹ *Centelles* is the Spanish for "spark," "flash."

left you." "Yes," said Don Mathias, "it is my steward. Whenever he comes to talk to me, I have a bad time of it. He speaks to me about my affairs; tells me I am spending principal and interest. . . . What a fool! One would fancy he lost by it himself!" "Why, lad," replied Don Antonio, "I am exactly in the same condition. I have a man of business who is no more rational than your steward. When the rogue, in obedience to my repeated commands, brings me some money, you would say it was his own. He always treats me to long arguments. 'Sir,' says he, 'you are on the road to ruin, and there is an execution out against you.' I am obliged to cut him short, to stop his foolish talk." "The mischief is," said Don Mathias, "that we cannot do without those fellows; they are a necessary evil." "Just so," replied Centelles . . . "But stop," he continued, laughing heartily; "a happy thought strikes me! Nothing better could be conceived. We can turn the serious interviews we have with them into a farce, and amuse ourselves with that which now vexes us. Listen: let me try and borrow from your steward all the money you need, and you shall do the same with my man of business; then they may both argue as much as they like, we can listen to them calmly. Your steward shall come with your accounts to me; my man of business shall go

with mine to you. I shall only hear of your extravagance, you will only see mine. It will be very amusing."

A thousand jests succeeded this flight of genius, and put the two young noblemen into a good humour. They continued to converse in a very lively fashion, till their talk was interrupted by Gregorio Rodriguez, who came back followed by a little old man, who was almost entirely bald. Don Antonio was for going away, and was saying: "good-bye, Don Mathias, we shall meet again soon. I leave you with these gentlemen. You have doubtless some business of importance together." "Oh, no," replied my master, "you had better stay, you are not in our way. This discreet old gentleman is an honest man who lends me money at five-and-twenty per cent. "Five-and-twenty per cent.," exclaimed Centelles, astonished. "Egad! I congratulate you on being in such good hands; I am not so kindly dealt with, and have to buy my money at an extravagant price; I generally borrow at fifty per cent." "What extortion," said the old usurer. "Where do these rogues expect to go to when they die? I am not at all surprised at the hue and cry raised against people who lend money on interest! It is the exorbitant profits which a few of them make on money lent, that ruins our honour and reputation. If all my brethren were like me, we should not be

so much reviled, for I never lend except to befriend a fellow-creature. Ah! if times were now as good as they were formerly, my purse would be at your service without any interest; and, even in spite of the present scarcity, I am almost ashamed of lending at five-and-twenty per cent. But one would think the money had all gone back into the bowels of the earth; you cannot get at it, and its scarcity, in short, compels me to restrain my benevolence. "How much do you need?" he continued, addressing my master. "Two hundred pistoles," answered Don Mathias. "I have four hundred here in a bag," replied the usurer; "I will let you have half of them." At the same time he drew forth from under his cloak a blue canvas bag, looking to me like the very one which the peasant Talego had just left, with five hundred pistoles, in the hands of Rodriguez. I soon knew what to think about the matter, and I saw clearly that Melendez had not bragged about the cleverness of his steward without sufficient cause. The old man emptied the bag, displayed the money on the table, and began to count it. This sight roused the cupidity of my master; he was fascinated by the appearance of the whole sum. "Señor Descomulgado,"¹ said he to the usurer, "I have just made a judicious reflection. What a great fool I am only to borrow to redeem my credit, and to forget that

¹*Descomulgado* is the Spanish for "perverse, excommunicated."

I have not got a penny ! I should be obliged again to have recourse to you to-morrow. I think I had better pocket the four hundred pistoles to save you the trouble of coming again." "My lord," replied the old man, "I had intended part of this money for a good licentiate, who has a large income which he charitably employs in persuading young girls to retire from the world, and in furnishing their retreats ; but, as you need the whole amount, it is at your service ; all you have to do is to think of the security. . ." "O, as for security," Rodriguez interrupted, taking a slip of paper from his pocket, "you shall have a good one. Here is an order which Don Mathias merely has to sign. It is a draft for five hundred pistoles on one of his tenants, Talego, a rich farmer of Mondejar." "That is all right," said the usurer, "I am sure I raise no difficulties, I accept straight off any reasonable proposal, without circumlocution." Then the steward offered his master a pen, and the latter, without reading the order, wrote his name at the bottom of the draft, whistling as he did so.

This business settled, the old man took leave of my master, who ran up to embrace him, saying: "Till our next meeting, master usurer; I am wholly yours. I don't know why you fellows are all thought to be rogues. You seem to me very necessary to the State; you are the consolation of thousands of young men

of rank, and the resource of all noblemen whose expenditure exceeds their income." "You are right," cried Centelles; "usurers are gentlemen whom we cannot sufficiently respect, and I too must embrace this man in honour of his five-and-twenty per cent." Thereupon he drew near, threw his arms around the old man's neck; and these two beaux began for their amusement to push him backwards and forwards, like two tennis players bandying a ball. After they had tossed him about for some time they suffered him to depart with the steward, who deserved these embraces more than the usurer, and something else into the bargain.

When Rodriguez and his tool were gone, Don Mathias sent the footman who had been present at the scene as well as myself, with half the pistoles to the Countess de Pedrosa, and secured the other half in a long purse embroidered with gold and silk, which he generally carried in his pocket. Well pleased at being again provided with cash, he said gaily to Don Antonio: "Let us consider, what shall we do with ourselves to-day?" "You speak like a man of sense," replied Centelles; "I am willing. Let us deliberate." Whilst they were pondering what course to pursue that day, two other noblemen came in: Don Alexo Segiar and Don Fernando de Gamboa; both about my master's age, that is, from twenty-

eight to thirty. These four gentlemen began with such a lively interchange of embraces, that any one would have said they had not met these ten years. After this Don Fernando, a stout and jovial fellow, addressing himself to Don Mathias and Don Antonio, said: "Gentlemen, where do you dine to-day? If you are not engaged, I shall take you to a place where you shall quaff nectar; I supped there last night, and came away between five and six this morning." "I wish to Heaven," exclaimed my master, "that I had spent the night as wisely! I should not have lost my money."

"As for me," said Centelles, "I treated myself to a new amusement last night. I like to change my pleasures, for it is only a variety of diversions which makes life agreeable. A friend took me to one of those gentlemen who collect the taxes, and manage at the same time the State's business, as well as their own. Every thing there was magnificent and in good taste; and the meal seemed to be pretty well served up; but the people of the house were so ridiculous that my fancy was tickled. This farmer of the revenue, though one of the most plebeian of his class, assumed the airs of a man of rank; and his wife, though hideously ugly, affected to be a beauty, and said a thousand silly things, flavoured with a Biscayan accent that gave zest to their foolishness. Add to this, that there were four or five

children at table, with their tutor, and you may imagine if this family supper party amused me."

"I supped with Arsenia, the actress," said Don Alexo Segiar. "There were six of us to supper: Arsenia, Florimonda, and a little coquette whom she knew, the Marquis de Zenette, Don Juan de Moncada, and your humble servant. We spent the night in drinking and talking in a very free and easy manner. It was very pleasant. To be sure, Arsenia and Florimonda are not endowed with much genius; but they have an experience in wickedness which supplies the place of wit. They are merry, lively, romping creatures: is not that a hundred times better than your women of sense?"

CHAPTER IV.

HOW GIL BLAS BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE SERVANTS OF THE BEAUX. THEY IMPART TO HIM THE ADMIRABLE SECRET OF EASILY ACQUIRING THE REPUTATION OF A WIT; AND THE SINGULAR OATH WHICH THEY MAKE HIM TAKE.

THESE noblemen went on talking in this strain, until Don Mathias, whom in the meantime I was helping to dress, was ready to go out.

Then he told me to follow him, and all the beaux went together to the tavern whither Don Fernando de Gamboa had proposed to take them. I walked behind them with three other servants; for each of the gentlemen had his own. I observed with astonishment that these three servants imitated their masters, and gave themselves the same airs. I took off my hat to them as I was a new comer; they returned the compliment, and one of them, after looking at me for a few minutes, said: "Brother, I can see by your manner that you have never yet lived with a young nobleman." "Alas, no!" I answered; "I have not been long in Madrid." "I should have thought so," he replied, "you smack of the provinces; you seem timid and awkward; there is a sort of stiffness in your bearing. But no matter, we shall soon polish you, take my word for it." "I am afraid you flatter me," I said. "No," he replied, "no; there is not such a big fool we cannot lick into shape; you may rely upon that."

He had no need to say more to convince me that my comrades were good fellows, and that I could not be in better hands for being turned into a lad of mettle. When we got to the tavern we found a meal ready prepared, which Don Fernando had taken the precaution of ordering in the morning. Our masters sat down, and we stood ready to wait on them.

The conversation was very lively, and I took vast pleasure in listening to it. Their character, their thoughts, their mode of expressing themselves delighted me. What vivacity! What play of fancy! These gentlemen seemed to me a new species! When the dessert was brought on the table we set before them a large supply of bottles of the best Spanish wine, and left the room, to go and dine ourselves in a small parlour where a table had been laid for us.

I soon saw that the combatants in our lists possessed even more merit than I had at first imagined. They were not content with assuming the manners of their masters, they even affected their language; and the rascals reproduced it so well that, save for a certain air of breeding, it was the same thing over again. I admired their free and easy carriage; I was still more charmed by their wit; but I despaired of ever becoming as agreeable as they. Don Fernando's servant, because his master was treating ours, did the honours of the meal; and as he was determined that nothing should be wanting, he called the landlord, and said to him, "Master tapster, give us ten bottles of your best wine; and you can add them to my master's bill as you usually do." "With pleasure," replied the landlord; "but, Master Gaspard, you know that Don Fernando already owes me for a good

many entertainments. If through your intervention I could get some little cash. . .” “O,” interrupted the valet, “don’t trouble yourself about what is due ; I guarantee it ; my master’s debts are as good as gold. It is true that a few unmannerly creditors have laid an embargo on our income ; but we shall soon obtain a replevy, and then we shall pay you without so much as examining your account.” The landlord brought us some wine, in spite of the embargo, and we drank it, on the credit of the replevy. It was worth while to see how we drank each other’s healths every instant, addressing one another by our master’s names. The servant of Don Antonio called Don Fernando’s servant Gamboa, and Don Fernando’s servant called Don Antonio’s Centelles : in like manner they called me Silva ; and we gradually became tipsy under these borrowed names, as did the noblemen to whom they rightly belonged.

Though I was less brilliant than my comrades, they nevertheless admitted that they were rather pleased with me. “Silva,” said one of the sprightliest among them, “we shall make something of you, my friend : I can see that you have plenty of genius, but you do not know how to turn it to account. The fear of speaking foolishly prevents you from saying anything off-hand ; but it is only by blurting out their talk that now-a-days thousands of men

set up as wits. If you want to shine you have only to abandon yourself to vivacity, and give forth without hesitation all that comes to the tip of your tongue; your very blunders will pass for a noble audacity. Though you should utter a hundred inanities, let but one witticism escape you, and all your silly sayings will be forgotten; the sally will be remembered, and a high opinion will be formed of your merits. That is what our masters practice so successfully, and that is what every man must do who aspires to the reputation of being a distinguished wit."

I was only too anxious to pass for a genius, and the secret of success which was imparted to me seemed so easy, that I determined not to neglect it. I made trial of it forthwith, and the wine I had drunk contributed to my success. I spoke at random, and had the good fortune to strike out among a hundred absurdities a few flashes of wit, which secured applause. This first attempt inspired me with confidence; I redoubled my vivacity to produce some bright sally, and chance again decided that my efforts should not be in vain.

"Well," said my fellow-servant, who had addressed me in the street, "are you not beginning to shake off your rustic manners? You have not been two hours in our company, and you are already quite another man; you will go on changing appreciably day by day. See

what it is to be in the service of people of quality ! It elevates the mind ; and situations with citizens can never do this." "You are right," I answered ; "and, therefore, I mean henceforth to devote my services entirely to the nobility." "That is well said," cried Don Fernando's servant, partly intoxicated. "It is not for plebeians to own superior geniuses such as we are. Come, gentlemen," he added ; "let us take an oath that we will never serve such fellows ; let us swear it by Styx !" We received this proposal with applause ; and glasses in hand, took this burlesque oath. We remained at table until our masters were pleased to get up. This was at midnight ; which seemed to my colleagues an excessive instance of sobriety. To be sure, their lordships left the inn thus early only to proceed to the house of a celebrated wanton, who lived in the court-quarter, and whose house was open night and day to men of pleasure. She was a woman from thirty-five to forty, still extremely handsome, entertaining, and so skilled in the art of pleasing that it was said she sold what was left of her beauty at a higher price than she had obtained for its first fruits. There were always two or three other first-class ladies of a similar kind at her house, who contributed not a little to the numerous gathering of noblemen who frequented it. In the afternoon there was gambling going on ; then supper was served,

and the night spent in drinking and making merry. Here our masters remained until daylight, and so did we, without thinking the time long; for whilst they were with the mistresses, we amused ourselves with the maids. At length we separated about dawn, and each of us went to bed at his own place.

My master having risen as usual about noon, dressed and went out. I followed him, and we paid a visit to Don Antonio Centelles, where we found a certain Don Alvaro de Acuna, an old gentleman, and a professed debauchee. The rising generation, if they wished to become fine gentlemen, put themselves in his hands. He trained them to pleasure, and taught them how to shine in society and to spend their patrimony. He no longer feared to consume his own; this had already been done. After these three gentlemen had embraced each other, Centelles said to my master: "Gad, Don Mathias, you could not have come at a better time! Don Alvaro has come to take me to a dinner, given by a citizen to the Marquis de Zenette and to Don Juan de Moncada: I want you to be of our party." "And what is this citizen's name?" asked Don Mathias. "Gregorio de Noriega," said Don Alvaro, "and I will tell you in half a dozen words the character of the young fellow. His father, a rich jeweller, has gone abroad to deal in precious stones, and left him, when he set out,

in the enjoyment of a handsome income. Gregorio is a blockhead inclined to spend all his property, who apes the beau, and would fain pass for a man of wit, in the teeth of nature. He has begged me to be his guide. I am his Mentor, and I can assure you, gentlemen, that I am leading him a pretty dance. His capital is already nearly all spent." "I do not doubt it," exclaimed Centelles; "I already see the cit in the workhouse. Come, Don Mathias," he continued, "let us make this man's acquaintance, and help to ruin him." "Willingly," my master replied; "I do so like to see the fortunes of these little upstarts marred;—fellows who fancy people mistake them for us! Now, nothing pleased me so much as the downfall of that publican's son, whom play and the desire of figuring amongst the great have compelled to sell everything, till he has not a house over his head." "O, as for him," replied Don Antonio, "he deserves no pity; he is as great a coxcomb in adversity as he was in prosperity."

Centelles and my master proceeded with Don Alvaro to the house of Gregorio de Noriega. We went there also, Mogicon¹ and myself, both delighted to find a feast going on, and to contribute our share in ruining a citizen. When we entered we found several men employed in

¹ *Mogicon* is the Spanish for "a blow given on the face with the fist clenched;" and also "a kind of sweetmeat."

getting ready the dinner, and from the dishes which they were preparing came a steam which favourably prejudiced the palate through the nostrils. The Marquis de Zenette and Don Juan de Moncada had just arrived. The master of the house appeared to me a great simpleton. He vainly attempted to assume the pleasant manners of the beaux; it was a very bad copy of those excellent originals, or rather, it was an idiot trying to give himself an air of nonchalance. Fancy a man of this kind amongst five wags all intent on making fun of him, and on drawing him into extravagance. "Gentlemen," said Don Alvaro, after the first compliments, "let me introduce to you Señor Gregorio de Noriega as a most finished gentleman, who possesses a great number of good qualities. I can assure you he has a highly cultivated mind. If you'll choose your own subjects, you'll find that he is equally strong on all points, from the most fine-spun subtleties of logic up to orthography." "O! that is too flattering!" interrupted the citizen, laughing awkwardly. "I might return the compliment, Señor Alvaro; it is you who are what we call a well of erudition." "I did not intend," replied Don Alvaro, "to fish for such delicate praise; but, upon my word, gentlemen, Señor Gregorio cannot fail to establish a name in society." "What charms me in him," said Don Antonio, "and

what I even prize above orthography, is the judicious choice he makes of the men with whom he associates. Instead of confining himself to the society of citizens, he wishes to associate with none but young noblemen, heedless of what it may cost him. There is an elevation of feeling in such behaviour which enchants me ; that is what you may indeed call spending money with taste and discernment ! ”

These ironical speeches were but the preludes to many more of the same sort. Poor Gregorio was fooled to the top of his bent by the beaux, who alternately showered upon him jests, the bearing of which the nincompoop never perceived. On the contrary, he took all that was said to him in sober earnest, and seemed highly gratified with his guests. It even seemed that by turning him into ridicule they conferred a favour upon him. In short, he served as their butt the whole time they were at table ; and they remained there for the rest of the afternoon, and throughout the night. We drank as much as we liked, as well as our masters ; and when we left the cit’s house, we were all in the best of trim.

CHAPTER V.

GIL BLAS SETS UP FOR A GALLANT, AND MAKES THE
ACQUAINTANCE OF A FINE LADY.

AFTER some hours' sleep I rose in a good humour; and remembering the advice which Melendez had given me, I went, until such time as my master might be getting up, to pay my court to our steward, whose vanity seemed not a little flattered by my attention in presenting my respects to him. He received me graciously, and asked if I liked the life I was leading. I told him it was new to me, but that I did not despair of growing accustomed to it in time.

In fact I did grow accustomed to it, and that very soon. My temper and disposition were quite altered. From being prudent and sedate, as I had been before, I became a pert and heedless merry-andrew. Don Antonio's valet complimented me on my metamorphosis, and said that I wanted nothing to be complete but to have an intrigue. He pointed out to me that this was absolutely necessary to put a finish on a pretty fellow; that all our comrades were loved by some fair lady or other; and that, for his part, he could boast of the favours of two ladies of quality. I concluded that the rogue was telling a falsehood. "Master Mogicon," said I, "you are

no doubt a handsome, witty young fellow, with merits of your own; but I do not see how ladies of quality, in whose establishments you are not engaged, could be charmed by a man of your condition." "Why, to tell you the truth," he replied, "they do not know who I am. It is in my master's clothes, and even under his name that I have made these conquests. I will tell you how; I dress myself like a young nobleman, assume the manners of one, walk about, and ogle all the women I see, until I meet with one who responds to my overtures. Then I follow, and contrive to speak to her, telling her that I am Don Antonio Centelles. I ask for an interview; the lady stands on ceremony; I am pressing, she yields; and so forth. That, my lad, is how I manage to carry on my gallantries, and I should advise you to follow my example."

I was too anxious to make a figure not to listen to this counsel; besides, I was not loth to enter on an amorous intrigue. Therefore, I resolved to disguise myself as a young nobleman, and go in search of adventures. I dare not disguise myself at our house, from fear of being observed; so I took a complete suit from my master's wardrobe, made it into a bundle, and carried it to a little barber's whom I knew, where I thought I might dress and undress conveniently. There I got myself up as fine as possible. The barber also lent a hand in my

adornment, and when we thought the effect could not be improved, I strolled towards the meadow of Saint Jerome, whence I felt quite sure I should not return without having set an intrigue on foot. But I was not obliged to go so far before I had a most brilliant beginning.

As I was crossing a bye-street I saw a richly dressed and most handsome lady come out of a small house and enter a hackney carriage that stood at the door. I stopped short to look at her, and bowed to her in such a manner as to convey to her that she did not displease me.¹ She, on her side, to show that she deserved my attention still more than I thought, raised her veil for a moment, and presented to my eyes a most lovely face. Meanwhile the carriage drove off, and I remained in the street, dazzled by the features I had just beheld. "What a lovely face," I said to myself; "this is just what is wanting to make me perfectly accomplished. If the two ladies who love Mogicon are as beautiful as this one, he is a lucky knave. I should be charmed with my fate if I had

¹ In the *Voyages faits en divers temps en Espagne . . . et ailleurs*, it is stated that "when Spanish ladies go about the town or elsewhere alone and not accompanied by gentlemen, it is allowable to ask them anything one can think of, without any fear of offending them; and if one lets them pass without saying something gallant, which they call *agacacos*, they hold you in but small estimation." Van Sommelsdyck says also that titled ladies and respectable women hardly ever leave their houses.

such a mistress." Musing on these things, I happened to cast my eyes on the house from which this fair creature had emerged, and saw, at the window of a lower room, an old woman who beckoned me to enter.

I instantly hastened into the house, and found in a pretty well furnished room, a venerable and discreet matron, who, taking me for a marquis at least, dropped a respectful curtsy, and said to me—"Señor, I fear that you must have a bad opinion of a woman who, without knowing you, beckons you to come into her house; but you will perhaps judge more favourably of me when you shall know that I do not treat everybody in this manner. You seem to be a lord at court." "You are not mistaken, my good woman," I broke in, stretching out my right leg, and poising myself on my left hip; "I am, without boasting, of one of the best families of Spain." "I thought so by your appearance," she replied, "and I will fairly own that I like to oblige people of quality; that is my weak point. I watched you through the window, looking very attentively at a lady who has just left me. Perhaps you have taken a fancy to her? tell me so plainly." "On the honour of a courtier," I rejoined, "she has captivated me. I have never seen any woman who charmed me more. Bring us together, my good lady, and count on my gratitude. It is not a bad thing to render

services of this kind to us noblemen ; they are not those for which we pay the worst."

"As I have already said," replied the old woman, "I am entirely devoted to people of quality ; I take a pleasure in being useful to them. In this house, for instance, I receive certain ladies whom appearances prevent from seeing their gallants at home. I lend them my house, that they may reconcile the warmth of their affection with the proprieties." "Excellent," said I to her ; "and so I suppose you have granted this favour to the lady in question ?" "No," she replied, "that lady is a young widow of quality in search of a lover ; but she is so hard to please in the matter that I do not know if you will suit her, whatever merits you may possess. I have already presented to her three strongly built noblemen, whom she has refused." "O, zounds ! my dear," I exclaimed with an air of assurance, "you have only to put me in her way. I shall give you a good account of her, take my word for it. I long for a private interview with a coy beauty. I have never met one of that kind." "Well," said the old woman, "you need only come here to-morrow about the same time, and your curiosity shall be satisfied." "I shall be punctual," I replied ; "we shall see if a young nobleman such as I can fail in making a conquest."

I returned to the little barber's, not caring to

look for other adventures, and very impatient for the sequel to this one. On the following day, therefore, after dressing again very carefully, I went to the old woman's an hour earlier than was necessary. "Señor," she said, "you are punctual, and I am glad of it. It is true that the prize is worth the trouble. I have seen our young widow, and we have spoken a good deal about you. I am forbidden to say anything; but I have taken such a liking to you that I cannot be silent. You have pleased, and you will be made happy. Between ourselves, the lady is a delicious creature; her husband did not live long with her; he just came and went like a shadow: she is just like a young girl." The honest old woman, doubtless, meant one of those intelligent girls who are clever enough to live single, without growing weary of it.

The heroine of the assignation soon arrived, in a hired carriage, as on the previous day, and superbly dressed. As soon as she appeared in the room I made five or six foppish bows, accompanied by the most graceful contortions. After this I approached her with a very familiar manner, and said, "My queen, you behold a young nobleman who is thoroughly captivated. Since yesterday your image has been constantly recurring to my mind, and you have driven out of my heart a duchess who was beginning to establish a footing there." "The triumph

is too glorious for me," she replied, removing her veil; "but my joy is not unalloyed. Young noblemen love variety, and they say their hearts are more difficult to keep than to empty Fortunatus' purse."¹ "Ah, my sovereign mistress," I replied, "let us not think of the future, I pray you; let us consider the present only. You are handsome, I am in love. If my passion is agreeable to you, let us link our hearts without reflection. Let us put off from land like sailors; let us not look to the dangers of the voyage, but only to its pleasures."

Whilst uttering these words I threw myself in raptures at the feet of my nymph; and, the better to imitate men of rank, I urged her vehemently to complete my happiness. She seemed to be somewhat moved by my entreaties, but thought it too soon to yield, and said, as she pushed me away: "Hold, you are too forward; you behave like a libertine; I sadly fear you are only a little rake." "For shame, Madam," I cried; "can you dislike what all distinguished ladies love? None but a few citizens' wives object to libertinism." "That is decisive," she replied, "I yield to so strong an argument. I see plainly that affectation is useless with you noblemen: a woman must needs meet you half way. Learn then your

¹ According to the *Piacevoli Notte* of the Italian author Straparola, who died about 1557, Fortunatus had a purse given him by Fortune, which was inexhaustible. In French such a supply of coin is called *la pistole volante*.

triumph," she added, with a show of confusion, as though her modesty suffered from the avowal; "you have inspired me with sentiments I never felt for anyone else, and I only wish to know who you are before I resolve to choose you for my lover. I believe you to be a young nobleman, and even a man of honour: but yet I am not sure of it; and however prepossessed I may be in your favour, I shall not bestow my affections on a person whom I do not know."

I immediately remembered how Don Antonio's servant had told me he escaped from a similar predicament, and meaning, like him, to pass for my master, I said to the widow: "Madam, I will not hesitate to tell you my name, which I need not be ashamed to own. Have you ever heard of Don Mathias de Silva?" "Yes," she replied; "I have even met him at a friend's house." Though bold enough by this time, I was rather disconcerted by this reply; but I recovered myself instantly; and calling up my presence of mind to extricate me, I said, "Well, my darling, you know a nobleman . . . whom . . . I know also . . . I am related to him, if I must tell you. His grandfather married the sister-in-law of one of my father's uncles. So you see we are rather near relations. My name is Don Cæsar. I am the only son of the illustrious Don Fernando de Ribera, who was slain fifteen

years ago in a battle fought on the frontiers of Portugal. I could give you all the particulars of the action; it was devilish warm work; but this would be losing precious moments which love prompts me to employ more agreeably."

I became urgent and impassioned after this speech; but to no purpose. The favours which my goddess suffered me to take, only made me sigh for those which she refused me. The hard-hearted creature went back to her carriage, which was waiting for her at the door. Nevertheless, I went away well satisfied with my good fortune, though I was not yet perfectly happy. "If," said I to myself, "I have received but half-kindnesses, it is because this lady is a woman of rank, who thinks she ought not to yield to my transports in a first interview. Her pride of birth has retarded my happiness; but it is only delayed for a few days." To be sure I also thought she might be a very clever adventuress; yet I preferred to look on the matter from its best side, and retained the favourable opinion I had conceived of the widow. We had agreed at parting to meet again two days after; and the hope of attaining the summit of my desires gave me a foretaste of the pleasures I anticipated.

With my mind full of the most agreeable ideas, I returned to the barber's. Having changed my dress I went to wait upon my

master at a tennis-court where I knew he was. I found him playing, and perceived that he was winning; for he was not one of those phlegmatic players who enrich or ruin themselves without changing countenance. He was full of jests, and overbearing when in luck, and very sulky when losing. He left the tennis-court in good humour, and went to the Prince's Theatre. I followed him to the door; and then, putting a ducat in my hand, he said: "Here, Gil Blas, as I have won to-day I wish you also to feel the benefit of it; go and enjoy yourself with your friends, and come to me at midnight to Arsenia's, where I am to sup with Don Alexo Segiar." After having said this he went in, and I remained pondering with whom I could spend my ducat, according to the intention of the giver. I did not muse long; Clarin,¹ Don Alexo's servant, suddenly came in sight; I took him to the nearest tavern, and there we amused ourselves till midnight. Thence we betook ourselves to Arsenia's house, where Clarin also had orders to attend. A small foot-boy opened the door, and took us into a lower room, where the maids of Arsenia and Florimonda were laughing aloud and gossiping, whilst their mistresses were above with our masters.

The arrival of two jolly fellows who had just

¹ *Clarin* is the Spanish for "a trumpet."

enjoyed a good supper, could not be displeasing to a couple of maids, and these the maids of actresses; but what was my astonishment when in one of these girls I recognised my widow, my adorable widow, whom I took for a countess or a marchioness! She seemed not less astonished to see her dear Don Cesar de Ribera changed into a beau's servant. Nevertheless, we looked at each other without betraying ourselves; indeed we both felt such a desire to laugh that we could not help indulging in it. After which, Laura, for that was her name, taking me aside, whilst Clarin was speaking to her companion, graciously held out her hand, saying in a low voice: "Shake hands, Don Cesar; instead of reproaching each other, let us congratulate our selves, my friend. You played your part to perfection, and I did not do mine amiss. What say you? Confess that you took me for one of those pretty women of quality who like to carry on an intrigue." "It is even so," I replied, "but be you who you may, my queen, I have not changed my feelings with my dress. I beg you to accept my services, and permit the servant of Don Mathias to complete what Don Cesar so happily began." "Indeed!" she answered; "I like you much better in your own character than in that of another. You are as a man what I am as a woman, which is the greatest praise I can give you. You are admitted amongst the number

of my worshippers. We do not need the old woman any more; you can come here and see me whenever you like. We theatrical ladies live without constraint, and familiarly with the men. No doubt the consequences are visible sometimes; but the public only laugh at it, and it is our business, you know, to amuse them."

Then we broke off, because we were not alone. The talk became general, sprightly, cheerful, and charged with double meaning. Each of us contributed his share. Arsenia's attendant especially, my lovely Laura, shone greatly, and displayed far more wit than virtue. We could also hear our masters and the actresses indulging in fits of laughter; which made me suppose that their conversation was quite as rational as our own. If all the fine things which were said that night at Arsenia's had been written down, I fancy that a very instructive book for the rising generation might have been made out of them. At last the time for departure, that is daybreak, arrived; and we were obliged to separate. Clarin followed Don Alexo, and I went home with Don Mathias.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONVERSATION OF CERTAIN NOBLEMEN ABOUT
THE ACTORS OF THE PRINCE'S COMPANY.

THE next morning my master, whilst he was dressing, received a letter from Don Alexo Segiar, desiring him to come to his house. We went, and found there the Marquis de Zenette and another young nobleman of prepossessing manners, whom I had never seen. "Don Mathias," said Segiar to my master, introducing to him the gentleman I did not know, "allow me to present to you Don Pompeyo de Castro, a relative of mine. He has been at the court of Poland¹ almost since his infancy. He came to Madrid last night, and returns to Warsaw to-morrow; he can only give me this day, and as I wish to make the most of so short a time, I thought of asking you and the Marquis de Zenette to make it pleasant to him." Thereupon my master and Don Alexo's relative embraced one another and exchanged many compliments. I was much pleased with Don Pompeyo's conversation; he seemed to have a solid and judicious mind.

They dined at Segiar's, and after the meal

¹ In the first edition of *Gil Blas* Lesage made Don Pompeyo live in Portugal, where his adventure took place. Our author altered this later to Poland.

these noblemen amused themselves at playing cards until it was time to go to the theatre. Then they all went together to the Prince's, to see a new tragedy, called the *Queen of Carthage*. The play over, they returned to supper, and their conversation turned first upon the drama which they had just heard, and then upon the actors. "As for the play," exclaimed Don Mathias, "I do not care much for it; Æneas is more insipid than in the *Æneid*. But it must be confessed that the piece was divinely played. What does Don Pompeyo think of it? He does not seem to agree with me." "Gentlemen," said that young lord, smiling, "I saw that you were so much charmed by the actors, and particularly by the actresses, that I hardly dare avow that my opinion is quite different from yours." "You are right," interrupted Don Alexo, in a jocular manner; "your censures would be ill received here. Respect our actresses before the trumpeters of their reputation. We carouse with them every day; we maintain their absolute perfection, of which we will even give them certificates if it were necessary." "No doubt of it," his relative answered, "you would do the same for their lives and manners, so partial you seem to be to them!"

"Your Polish actresses," said the Marquis de Zenette with a laugh, "are doubtless far superior?" "They certainly are," replied Don

Pompeyo. "There are at least a few of them who are faultless." "These," replied the Marquis, "may count upon your certificate?" "I have no intimate acquaintance with them," answered Don Pompeyo. "I do not share in their revels, and can judge of their merits without prejudice. Frankly," he continued, "do you think your theatrical company first-rate?" "No," replied the Marquis, "I do not think so, and I would only plead the cause of a small number of them: I abandon all the rest. Will you not agree that the actress who played the part of Dido is admirable? Does she not represent the queen with all the dignity and grace which realise our idea of the character? Do you not admire the art with which she engages the spectator's interest and makes him experience the emotions which she expresses? She may be called consummate in the refined art of declamation." "I agree with you," said Don Pompeyo, "that she can excite and touch her audience; no actress could be more pathetic, and it was a fine performance, but it is not faultless. Two or three things in her acting shocked me. If she wishes to express surprise she rolls her eyes in an exaggerated fashion, which is not becoming in a princess. And in raising her voice, which is naturally mellifluous, she mars its sweetness, and produces a disagreeable croak. Besides, it seemed to me, in more

than one passage, that she might be suspected of not understanding very well what she was saying. However, I would rather think that she was inattentive than charge her with lack of capacity."

"As far as I see," said Don Mathias to the critic, "you would not be the man to write verses in praise of our actresses." "Excuse me," answered Don Pompeyo; "I can recognise much talent through all their imperfections. I will even confess that I was enchanted with the actress who played the chambermaid in the interludes.¹ She has a fine natural talent and treads the stage gracefully. When she has anything pointed to deliver it is heightened by an arch smile, full of charm, which lends it additional zest. It might be objected that occasionally she shows a little too much vivacity, and transgresses the limits of allowable freedom; but we ought not to be hypercritical. I only wish she would correct a certain bad habit of hers. More than once, in a serious passage, in the middle of a scene, she suddenly interrupts the action of the play, and gives way to a silly inclination to laugh. You will tell me that the pit applauds her in these very places; that is lucky for her."

"And what do you think of the men?"

¹ It is said that by the chambermaid an actress named Desmares was meant. The other portraits of actors and actresses are also supposed to represent certain comedians who were contemporaries of Lesage.

interrupted the Marquis; "you ought to have a volley ready for them, as you do not spare the women." "Not so," said Don Pompeyo, "there are some promising young actors, and I am especially pleased with that stout comedian who played the part of Dido's prime minister. He recites very naturally, and that is how they declaim in Poland." "If you are satisfied with him," said Segiar, "you ought to be charmed with the player who acted Æneas. Did he not strike you as a great comedian, an original performer?" "Very original," replied the critic. "His tones are peculiar to himself, and some of them are very shrill. Almost always unnatural, he hurries over the words which express the sentiment, and dwells on the others; he even emphasises the conjunctions. He amused me vastly, above all when he described to his confidant how distressed he was at the thought of abandoning the princess; never was grief more ludicrously expressed." "Softly, cousin!" replied Don Alexo, "you will end by making us believe that there is not much good taste at the Polish court. Do you know that the actor we are speaking of is considered an extraordinary man? Did you not hear the thunders of applause which he called forth? That proves he is not so bad after all." "It proves nothing," replied Don Pompeyo. "Gentlemen," he continued, "pray, let us take no account of the applause of the pit, for it is

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often given to actors very unseasonably. Indeed it applauds true merit more rarely than false, as Phædrus tells us in an ingenious fable, which, with your leave, I will tell you. The inhabitants of a certain town were all assembled in a large open space, to see some actors. Amongst the performers was one who was applauded continually. This buffoon, towards the end of the entertainment, desired to bring down the curtain with a new performance. He appeared on the stage alone, stooped down, covered his head with his cloak, and began to imitate the squeaking of a sucking pig. He did it so well that the audience actually thought he had one under his clothes. They therefore called out to him to take off his cloak and his gown, and shake them. He did so, but no pig was to be seen underneath; and then the whole assembly applauded him with greater enthusiasm than before. A peasant amongst the spectators was disgusted by these manifestations of admiration. ‘Gentlemen,’ he cried, ‘you are wrong to be so delighted with that buffoon; he is not such a good actor as you think; I can imitate a squeaking pig better than he can; and if you doubt it, only attend here to-morrow at the same hour.’ The people, prejudiced as they were in favour of the actor, assembled on the next day in still greater numbers, rather for the purpose of hissing the countryman than of seeing what he could do.

The two rivals appeared on the stage. The buffoon began, and was even more applauded than on the previous day. Then the peasant, stooping down in his turn, and muffling his head in his cloak, pulled the ear of a real pig, which he held under his arm, and made it squeak loudly. But the audience did not fail to give the preference to the buffoon, and hooted the peasant, who then suddenly showed the sucking pig to the spectators, and said, 'Gentlemen, you are not hissing me, but the pig itself. So much for your judgment.'

"Cousin," said Don Alexo, "your fable is rather satirical. Nevertheless, in spite of your sucking pig, we do not yield. But let us change the subject," he added, "I am tired of it. Must you set off to-morrow, then, though I am so very anxious to keep you longer?" "I wish I could protract my stay," replied his relative, "but I cannot, as I have already told you. I came to the Spanish court on State business. Yesterday, on my arrival, I had an audience of the Prime Minister; I am to see him again, to-morrow morning, and immediately afterwards I must return to Warsaw." "You have become quite a Pole," said Segiar, "and in all likelihood you will never settle again in Madrid." "I think not," replied Don Pompeyo; "I have the good fortune to be liked by the king of Poland, and I enjoy myself greatly at his court. But, however kind he may be to

me, would you believe that I was on the point of leaving his dominions for ever?" "Indeed! how did that happen?" asked the Marquis. "Pray relate to us your adventure." "Willingly," replied Don Pompeyo, "and it will be my history at the same time."

CHAPTER VII.

THE HISTORY OF DON POMPEYO DE CASTRO.

"DON ALEXO," he continued, "knows that I wanted to be a soldier from my childhood; and as our native country was at peace, I went to Poland, against which the Turks had just declared war. I was presented at court, and the king gave me a commission in his army. I was one of the poorest younger sons in Spain; so that it was necessary for me to distinguish myself by some deeds which might attract the notice of the commander-in-chief. I did my duty so well that, after a rather protracted war, the king, on the conclusion of peace, and thanks to the high commendations which the general officers gave me, rewarded me with a considerable pension. Thankful for the monarch's generosity, I lost no opportunity of testifying to him my gratitude by my assiduity. I was in attendance upon him whenever I was

allowed to pay him my respects. By this behaviour I gradually gained the love of that prince, and I received new favours at his hands.

“One day, I so distinguished myself in tilting at the ring, and in a bull-fight¹ preceding it, that the whole court extolled my strength and my skill. On returning home, overwhelmed with applause, I received a note, informing me that a lady, whose conquest ought to flatter me more than all the honour I had gained during the day, wished to have the pleasure of my company, and requested me to betake myself at nightfall to a certain place which was mentioned. This letter gave me more pleasure than all the praise I had received, and I concluded the person who had written to me to be a lady of the highest rank. You may easily imagine that I flew to the place appointed. An old woman, who was waiting to be my guide, led me through a small garden-gate into a large house, and shut me into a handsome little room, saying, “Remain here, and I will inform my mistress of your arrival.” I observed many precious things in this cabinet, which was lighted by a great number of wax candles; and this magnificence confirmed the opinion I had already conceived of the lady’s high birth. If all that I saw

¹ Tilting at the ring and bull-fights were favourite amusements in Spain and in Portugal; but not in Poland.

seemed to strengthen the conjecture that it could only be a lady of the highest rank, her appearance thoroughly convinced me of it, so noble and majestic was her bearing. And yet, after all, I was wrong.

“‘Noble sir,’ she said, ‘after the advances I have made, it would be idle to try to conceal the fact that I have conceived a passion for you. Your brilliant actions of to-day before the whole court did not inspire it; they only hastened its disclosure. I have seen you more than once; I have inquired into your character, and the favourable things which I have heard determined me to indulge my inclination. But do not suppose,’ she continued, ‘that you have made a conquest of some duchess. I am only the widow of a mere officer of the royal guard; but that which makes your triumph glorious is that I prefer you to one of the first noblemen of the kingdom. Prince Radzivil¹ loves me, and spares no effort to please me. But he does not succeed, and it is only through vanity that I endure his importunities.’

“Though I perceived from this speech that I had to do with a coquette, I none the less thanked my stars for this adventure. Donna Hortensia, for that was the lady’s name, was still in the prime of youth, and her beauty

¹ In the first edition, where the scene of Don Pompeyo’s adventure is laid in Portugal, this prince is called “Duke of Almeida.”

dazzled me. Moreover, the possession of a heart was offered me which was denied to the addresses of a prince. What a triumph for a Spanish gentleman! I fell at Hortensia's feet to thank her for her kindness. I said all that a gallant man could say, and she had cause to be satisfied with my outburst of gratitude. So we parted on the best possible terms, after agreeing to meet every night when the prince was prevented from coming, of which she promised to keep me punctually informed. She did not fail in this, and I became the Adonis of this new Venus.

“But the pleasures of life do not last for ever. Careful as the lady was to hide the knowledge of our connection from my rival, he nevertheless learned all that it behoved us to keep from him. A discontented chambermaid informed him of it. This nobleman, naturally generous, but haughty, jealous and passionate, was indignant at my presumption. Rage and jealousy took possession of his soul; and following solely the dictates of his fury he resolved to be avenged upon me in an infamous manner. One night, when I was with Hortensia, he waylaid me at the garden gate, accompanied by all his servants, armed with cudgels. As I was going out he ordered these wretches to seize me, and told them to cudgel me to death. ‘Lay on,’ he said; ‘let the rash villain perish under your hands; thus shall

his insolence be punished.' No sooner had he said this, than his domestics assailed me in a body, and gave me such a beating that they stretched me senseless on the ground; after which they departed with their master, for whom this butchery had been a very pleasant spectacle. I remained during the remainder of the night in the state in which they had left me. At daybreak some people who happened to pass, seeing that I still breathed, were charitable enough to take me to a surgeon's. Fortunately my wounds were not mortal, and I fell into the hands of a clever man who thoroughly cured me in a couple of months. At the end of that time I reappeared at court, and resumed my former way of living, except that I did not return to Hortensia, who, on her side, made no advances to see me again, since the prince had made this the condition of her being pardoned. My adventure was known to all, and as I had the reputation of not being a coward, everybody was astonished to see me as calm as if I had not been outraged, for I did not impart my thoughts to any one, and appeared to cherish no resentment. No one knew what to think of my feigned insensibility. Some thought that, in spite of my courage, the rank of my antagonist awed me, and compelled me to put up with the insult; others, with more reason, suspected my silence, and regarded my apparent indifference as a deceptive calm. The king

held with these latter that I was not the man to let such an outrage go unpunished, and that I would not fail to avenge myself as soon as a favourable opportunity presented itself. In order to discover my real intention, he summoned me one day into his closet, and said to me, 'Don Pompeyo, I am aware of the accident which has befallen you, and I own I am surprised at your forbearance; you are undoubtedly dissimulating.' 'Sire,' I replied, 'I am ignorant as to who the offender was; I have been attacked in the night by unknown men: it is a misfortune for which I must console myself as well as I can.' 'No, no,' replied the king, 'I am not deceived by such evasive answers: I know everything. Prince Radzivil has mortally offended you; you are a nobleman and a Castilian; I know to what these two qualities compel you: you have determined to be avenged. Confide in me the design you have framed: I insist upon it. Never fear that you will repent of entrusting me with your secret.'

" 'Since your majesty commands it,' I replied, 'I shall disclose my feelings without reserve. Yes, sire, I intend to be avenged for the outrage done to me. Every man who bears a name like mine is accountable for it to his race. You know of the unworthy treatment I have received; I, therefore, intend to kill the prince, and to avenge myself in a

manner suitable to the offence, I shall plunge a dagger in his breast, or shoot him through the head ; and escape, if I can, to Spain. That is my design.'

" 'It is violent,' said the king, 'and yet I cannot condemn it. After the cruel outrage which Radzivil has inflicted on you, he is worthy of the punishment you reserve for him. But do not carry out your plan hastily ; let me devise a method for settling the matter between you.' 'Ah, sire,' I exclaimed bitterly, 'why did you compel me to divulge my secret? What method can . . .' 'If mine is not to your satisfaction,' he interrupted, 'you can execute what you have resolved upon. I have no intention of abusing the confidence you have placed in me ; I will not compromise your honour ; have no anxiety on that point.'

"I was greatly at a loss to know how the king proposed to bring the matter to an amicable issue. He set to work in this way. He had a private interview with my rival. 'Prince,' he said to him, 'you have insulted Don Pompeyo de Castro. You are not ignorant that he is a man of noble birth, a knight whom I love, and who has served me well. You owe him satisfaction.' 'I have no mind to refuse him it,' answered the prince. 'If he complains of my wrath, I am ready to give an account of it by arms.' 'Another reparation is called for,' replied the king ; 'a Spanish gentleman com-

prehends the laws of honour too well to fight on equal terms with a cowardly assassin. I can use no milder name ; and you can only atone for the indignity of your conduct by yourself presenting a cane to your enemy, and by offering to submit to his blows.' 'Good Heaven!' exclaimed my rival. 'What, sire, would you have a man of my rank degrade, humiliate himself before a mere gentleman, and even receive blows from him?' 'No,' rejoined the monarch, 'I will make Don Pompeyo promise not to touch you. Only ask his pardon for your violence when you offer him the cane ; that is all I require from you.' 'And it is too much to expect from me, sire,' Radzivil hastily broke in ; 'I would rather live exposed to the secret shafts which his revenge may prepare.' 'Your life is dear to me,' said the king, 'and I do not want this affair to have evil consequences. In order to end it with the least annoyance to you, I shall be the sole witness of the satisfaction which I insist on your rendering to the Spaniard.' The king needed all the influence he had over the prince to induce him to take so mortifying a step. Nevertheless the monarch succeeded ; and then he sent for me. He repeated the conversation which he had had with my enemy, and asked if I would be satisfied with the reparation which they had agreed upon. I said that I would ; and I gave my word of honour

that, far from striking the offender, I would not even accept the cane he should offer me. This being arranged, the prince and myself went to the king's palace upon a certain day, at an appointed hour; and when his majesty was alone with us in his cabinet, he said to Radzivil, 'Now, then, acknowledge your fault and deserve to be forgiven.' Then my enemy apologised to me, and offered me the cane which he had in his hand. 'Don Pompeyo,' the monarch remarked to me at the same time, 'take this cane, and let not my presence prevent you from satisfying your outraged honour. I release you from the pledge you gave me not to strike your enemy.' 'No, sire,' I replied, 'it is enough that he has submitted to receive a blow: an offended Spaniard requires no more.' 'Well,' said the king, since you are satisfied with this apology, both of you can now observe what is customary in such a case. Measure swords, and end your quarrel worthily.' 'That is what I ardently desire,' said the prince, abruptly; 'for that alone can make amends for the disgraceful step I have just taken.'

"With these words he left the room, full of rage and confusion; and two hours later he sent to say that he awaited me in a secluded spot. I went there, and found this nobleman quite in a humour for fighting. He was not quite forty-five, and lacked neither courage nor skill:

so that it was an equal match between us. ‘Come, Don Pompeyo,’ he said, ‘let us bring our differences to an end. We ought both to be exasperated; you, for the treatment you have received at my hands, and I, for having asked your pardon.’ Whilst saying these words he drew his sword so hastily that I had no time to answer him. He pressed me hard at first; but I was fortunate enough to parry all his thrusts. I pressed him in my turn; I felt that I had to do with a man who was as skilled in defence as in attack; and there is no knowing what would have happened if he had not made a false step in retreating, and so fallen backwards. I stood still at once, and told the prince to rise. ‘Why spare me?’ he replied; ‘your pity insults me.’ ‘I will not take advantage of your misfortune,’ said I; ‘I should mar my fame. Once more, rise, and let us continue the contest.’

“‘Don Pompeyo,’ he said as he rose, ‘after this act of generosity, honour does not permit me to use my sword against you. What would be said of me if I were to pierce you through the heart? I should be branded as a coward for having taken the life of a man who might have taken mine. I cannot, therefore, anew lift my arm against you; warm transports of gratitude succeed to the furious emotions which were raging within me. Don Pompeyo,’ he continued, ‘let us mutually lay aside our

hatred; let us even go further, let us be friends.' 'Ah, my lord,' I cried, 'I accept joyfully so flattering a proposal; I proffer you my sincere friendship; and, to give you a first proof of it, I promise never again to enter Donna Hortensia's house, even if she herself should invite me.' 'Nay,' he replied, 'I yield the lady to you; justice requires me to give her up to you since her affections are yours already.' 'No, no,' I interrupted, 'you love her. The favours she might bestow upon me would give you pain; I sacrifice them to your peace of mind.' 'Ah! too generous Castilian,' replied Radzivil, clasping me in his arms, 'your sentiments charm me. What remorse they cause me! With what grief, with what shame do I recall the outrage you have received! The satisfaction which I gave you in the king's apartment seems to me at this moment too slight. I desire to repair the wrong more fully, and in order to entirely obliterate the dishonour, I offer you in marriage one of my nieces, whose hand is at my disposal. She is a rich heiress, not fifteen years old, and with beauty beyond the attractions of mere youth.'

"Thereupon I paid the prince all the compliments which the honour of being allied to him could suggest; and a few days afterwards married his niece. The whole court congratulated this lord on having crowned the good

fortune of a gentleman whom he had before covered with ignominy, and my friends rejoiced with me at the happy issue of an adventure which might have had a more lamentable result. From that time, gentlemen, I have spent life pleasantly in Warsaw; I am beloved by my wife, and I still love her; Prince Radzivil gives me every day fresh evidences of friendship, and I may venture to boast that I am a favourite of the King of Poland. The importance of the mission which at his command I am discharging in Madrid proves to me that he still esteems me."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACCIDENT WHICH COMPELLED GIL BLAS TO
SEEK ANOTHER SITUATION.

SUCH was the story which Don Pompeyo related, and which the servant of Don Alexo and myself overheard, though our masters had taken the precaution of sending us away before he began. Instead of withdrawing we stopped behind the door, which we had left ajar, and thus we did not lose a word. After this, these noblemen went on drinking, but they did not prolong their carousal till morning, because Don Pompeyo, who was to have an audience of the minister in the morning, was glad to

rest a little beforehand. The Marquis de Zenette and my master took a cordial leave of the stranger, bade him adieu, and left him with his relative.

For once we went to bed before daybreak, and Don Mathias, when he woke, invested me with a new office. "Gil Blas," he said, "get paper and ink, and write two or three letters which I shall dictate to you; I appoint you my secretary." "Well," said I to myself, "here is another addition to my functions. As a servant I follow my master everywhere; as a valet I help him to dress; and I am to write for him as his secretary; Heaven be praised! I am going to enact three different characters, like the triple Hecate." "You do not know," he continued, "what my intention is? I will tell you; but be discreet about it; your life depends on it. As I sometimes meet men who boast of their love intrigues to me, I want, in order to surpass them all, to fill my pockets with fictitious letters from ladies, which I can read to them. That will divert me for the moment; and, happier than those of my acquaintances who make conquests only for the pleasure of boasting of them, I can make them public without having had the trouble of making them. But," he added, "vary your writing, so that the letters may not seem all to be written in the same hand."

Upon this I took paper, pen, and ink, and

disposed myself to obey Don Mathias, who forthwith dictated a love-letter in these terms : “ You were not at the place of assignation to-night. Ah ! Don Mathias, what can you say to excuse yourself ? My error was a cruel one. You punish me deservedly for the vanity of believing that all the amusements and all the business in the world ought to give way to the pleasure of seeing Donna Clara de Mendoza ! ” After this note he made me write another, as if from a lady who preferred him to a prince ; and again a third, wherein a lady told him that, if she were convinced of his discretion, she would make a voyage to Cythera with him. Not content with dictating these pretty love-letters to me, he made me sign the names of several ladies of quality. I could not help telling him that I thought this a very delicate matter, but he told me not to give my advice till he should ask for it, so I was obliged to hold my tongue and carry out his orders. This done, he got up, and I helped him to dress ; then he put the letters in his pockets, and went out. I followed him, and we dined with Don Juan de Moncada, who was that day treating five or six gentlemen of his acquaintance.

The entertainment was sumptuous ; and mirth, the best relish of all banquets, prevailed throughout the meal. All the guests contributed to enliven the conversation, some by jests,

others by relating stories of which they said they were the heroes. My master did not lose such a fine opportunity of bringing in the letters which he had made me write. He read them aloud, and that so impressively that perhaps every one save his secretary was deceived. Amongst the company before whom he read them with so much audacity was a certain Don Lope de Velasco, a very grave man, who, instead of laughing like the others at the supposed good fortune of the reader, calmly asked him if the conquest of Donna Clara had cost him much trouble. "Less than nothing," Don Mathias replied; "she made all the advances. She saw me walking about; I pleased her; somebody followed me by her orders to find out who I was. She wrote to me, and appointed to meet me at her house at an hour of the night when everything was sure to be quiet. I went there, was introduced into her room. . . but I am too discreet to tell you the rest."

At this laconic narrative Don Lope showed a great change of countenance. It was not difficult to detect the interest he took in the lady in question. "All those love-letters," he said, darting a furious look at my master, "are infamous forgeries, and especially the one which you boast of having received from Donna Clara de Mendoza. There is not, in all Spain, a more modest maiden. For these two years a

gentleman, neither your inferior in birth nor in personal merit, has adopted every means in his power to enlist her affections. He has barely received from her the slightest encouragement; but he may flatter himself that, if she were capable of according other favours, it would have been to him alone." "Well, who says the contrary?" interrupted Don Mathias, jestingly. "I agree with you that she is a very honourable young lady. On my part, I am a very honourable young fellow. Therefore, you must be convinced that nothing but what is very honourable has passed between us." "O, this is too much," said Don Lope; "a truce to jests. You are an impostor. Donna Clara has never made an assignation to meet you by night. I will not suffer you to blacken her reputation; I am too much of a gentleman to tell you any more." Having said these words he looked sternly at all the company, and withdrew, with a manner which made me think that this business might have very serious consequences. My master, who was fairly brave for a nobleman of his character, made light of Don Lope's threats. "What a blockhead!" he cried, bursting out into a loud fit of laughter. "Our knights errant used to maintain the beauty of their mistresses; but he wishes to vindicate the chastity of his—a thing which seems to me still more ridiculous."

The retirement of Velasco, which Moncada

had vainly attempted to prevent, was no interruption to the merriment. The gentlemen, without paying much heed to it, continued to make merry, and only separated at daybreak. My master and I went to bed about five in the morning. I was very sleepy, and I thought I should have enjoyed some sound slumbers; but I reckoned without my host, or rather without our doorkeeper, who came and woke me an hour after, to tell me that there was a young man at the door asking for me. "Ah, you confounded doorkeeper," I said, yawning, "do you forget that I have only just got into bed? Tell the young man I am asleep, and let him come back presently." "He insists on speaking with you at once," he replied, "he asserts that his business is pressing." Thereupon I got up, only put on my breeches and doublet, and went down stairs swearing, to find the young man who was waiting for me. "Friend," said I, "pray tell me what pressing business procures me the honour of seeing you so early?" He replied, "I have a letter to deliver personally into Don Mathias's own hands, to be read by him without loss of time. It is of the utmost consequence to him; pray, take me to his room." As I thought the matter of importance, I took the liberty of going to wake my master. "Excuse me," said I, "if I disturb your rest; but the importance. . . ." "What do you want with me?" he sharply asked. "My

lord," then said the man who accompanied me, "it is a letter which I have to give you on the part of Don Lope de Velasco." Don Mathias took the note, opened it, and after reading it, said to Don Lope's valet, "My lad, I never get up before midday, let the party be ever so agreeable; judge whether I shall get up at six in the morning to fight! You may tell your master that, if he is still in the place which he mentions at half-past twelve, I shall come and meet him there; carry him that reply." With those words he sank back in his bed, and was soon asleep again.

He rose between eleven and twelve, and dressed with the utmost composure; then he went out, telling me that he would dispense with my services; but I was too anxious to see what became of him to obey him. I sneaked after him to the meadow of Saint Jerome, where I saw Don Lope de Velasco resolutely waiting for him. I concealed myself in order to observe them; and perceived from a distance their meeting and beginning to fight a moment later. The engagement lasted long. They alternately pressed each other with much skill and vigour. However, victory declared itself for Don Lope; he ran my master through, stretched him on the ground, and made his escape, pleased to be so well avenged. I ran to the unfortunate Don Mathias, and found him unconscious and almost lifeless. The sight

moved me, and I could not help weeping at a death to which, unconsciously, I had myself contributed. Nevertheless, in spite of my grief, I did not forget to consider my own interests. I quickly returned home, without saying a word. I made a parcel of my clothes, amongst which I accidentally put a few of my master's; and when I had taken this to the barber's, where my fine suit still remained, I spread abroad in the town the sad occurrence which I had witnessed. I related it to all who would listen to me, and, above all, did not fail to acquaint Rodriguez of it. He seemed to be less afflicted by it than concerned as to the measures necessary to be taken. He assembled the servants, told them to follow him, and we all went to St Jerome's meadow. We took up Don Mathias, who was still breathing, but who died three hours after he was carried home. Thus perished Don Mathias de Silva, for having taken it into his head to read suppositious love-letters at an unseasonable moment.

CHAPTER IX.

WHOM GIL BLAS SERVED AFTER THE DEATH OF
DON MATHIAS DE SILVA.

A FEW days after the funeral of Don Mathias, all his servants were paid off and dismissed. I went to lodge at the little barber's, with whom I began to become very intimate; I thought it would be more agreeable to stop there than at Melendez's. As I did not want money I was in no hurry about seeking another place; besides, I had become hard to please. I resolved to serve none but people of rank, and I also determined to make full enquiries regarding any situations offered. I did not consider the best too good for me, so far did the valet of a young nobleman seem superior to the common herd of servants.

Until my good fortune should put in my way such a place as I thought I deserved, it seemed to me that I could not do better than devote my leisure to my lovely Laura, whom I had not seen since we had so amusingly undeceived one another. I dared not dress like Don Cesar de Ribera; I could not put on this suit except for the purpose of disguise, unless I wished to be taken for a madman. But my own suit being still very passable, and having good shoes and a good hat, I dressed

myself with the barber's assistance, in a style which hit the mean between Don Cesar and Gil Blas. Thereupon I betook myself to Arsenia's house. I found Laura alone in the same room where I had previously seen her. "Ah! it is you," she exclaimed, as soon as she saw me, "I thought you were lost. It is about seven or eight days ago since I gave you leave to come and see me; but it seems that you don't abuse the liberty which the fair sex gives you."

I excused myself on the ground of my master's death, and on my occupations in consequence thereof, and I very politely added that, even in my troubles, my fair Laura had been ever present in my thoughts. "If that is so," she said, "I shall reproach you no longer; and I will confess also that I have been thinking of you. As soon as I heard of Don Mathias' misfortune, I formed a plan which perhaps will not displease you. A long while ago I heard my mistress say that she wanted a sort of man of business in the house, a young man who was a good manager, and could carefully keep accounts of the money spent in housekeeping; I have had my eye on your lordship, and it strikes me such an office would exactly suit you." "I feel," I replied, "that I should acquit myself in a wonderful manner; I have read Aristotle's *Economics*;¹ and

¹ It is strange to find Aristotle's *Economics* quoted by Gil Blas when speaking to a ladies' maid.

as for keeping accounts, that is my strong point. . . But, my dear girl," I added, "there is a difficulty in the way which will prevent my entering Arsenia's service." "What is that difficulty?" asked Laura. "I have sworn," said I, "never again to serve plebeians; I have even sworn it by the Styx! If Jupiter dare not violate such an oath, judge whether a servant ought to observe it!" "Whom do you call plebeians?" said the maid, haughtily: "for what do you take actresses? Do you take them for barristers or attorneys' wives? I would have you know, my friend, that actresses rank with the nobility, and are more than noble by the alliances which they form with men of the highest birth."

"If this be the case, my princess," said I, "I can accept the place which you have destined for me; I shall not be lowering myself." "To be sure not," she replied; "to come from a beau into the service of a stage-heroine is to continue in the same society. We are on a level with people of quality. We have the same sort of carriages, we live as well, and in fact we ought to be classed together in private life. Indeed," she added, "if you compare a marquis and an actor for a whole day, it is almost one and the same thing. If a marquis, for three parts of the day, is, by virtue of his birth, superior to the actor, a comedian during the other quarter overtops

the marquis, by appearing as an emperor or a king. It seems to me that this produces a balance of nobility and greatness which brings us on a level with the courtiers." "Ay, of a truth," I replied, "you are on a level with each other, there is no gainsaying that. Hang it! Actors are not ragamuffins, as I used to think, and you inspire me with a strong desire to serve such gentlemanly people." "Well," she replied, "come back in a couple of days. By that time I shall have persuaded my mistress into engaging you; I will speak to her in your favour, and as I have some influence with her, I am convinced that I can bring you under this roof."

I thanked Laura for her good intentions; I assured her I was filled with gratitude, and I made this declaration with such transports as left her no room to doubt it. We had a rather long conversation, which would have lasted still longer if a little page had not come to tell my princess that her mistress was asking for her. We parted; I left the actress's house, in the pleasant hope of soon living there at my ease. I did not fail to return in a couple of days. "I was expecting you," Laura said, "to tell you that you are now an inmate of this house. Come, follow me; I shall introduce you to my mistress." Thereupon she led me through a suite of five or six rooms, each more richly furnished than the rest.

What luxury ! What splendour ! I thought I was in a vice-regal house, or rather I fancied I saw all the wealth of the world accumulated in one and the same place. In fact the wealth of several nations was gathered there. This suite might be described as the temple of a goddess, to whom every traveller made an offering of some rare product of his native country. The divinity was seated on a large satin cushion ;¹ she seemed charming in my eyes, and sleek with the savour of the sacrifices. She was in a coquettish dishabille, and her lovely hands were busy preparing a new head-dress for a part in which she was to appear that night. "Madam," said her maid, "here is the steward I spoke of; I can assure you that you could never get a better." Arsenia looked at me very closely, and fortunately I did not displease her. "Why, Laura," she exclaimed, "this is a very nice-looking young man. I can see he will suit me very well." Then, addressing me, she said, "My lad, I like your appearance, and I have but

¹ Van Sommelsdyck says in the *Voyage d'Espagne* (ch. ix.): "The (Spanish) ladies are always seated on the carpet or on cushions, in the Turkish fashion ;" and the Countess d'Aulnoy, in her *Relation*, mentions that on visiting the youthful princess of Monteleon, she saw more than sixty ladies of high rank, all seated on the carpet with their legs crossed under them. This was most probable, because a Spanish lady never allowed her feet to be seen, for, says the Countess in her eighth letter: *J'ai entendu dire qu'après qu'une dame a eu toutes les complaisances possibles pour un cavalier, c'est en lui montrant son pied qu'elle lui confirme sa tendresse, et c'est ce qu'on appelle ici la dernière faveur.*

one thing to say to you—you will be satisfied with me if I am so with you.” I answered that I would do my utmost to serve her well. As I saw that we were agreed, I immediately went to fetch my clothes, and returned to instal myself in the house.

CHAPTER X.

WHICH IS NO LONGER THAN THE LAST.

It was nearly time for the play, and my mistress bade me follow her to the theatre with Laura. We went to her dressing-room, where she took off her ordinary dress and put on a more magnificent one for the evening’s performance. When the performance began, Laura took me to a place where I could comfortably see and hear the actors, and then she sat down beside me. On the whole they did not please me, doubtless because Don Pompeyo had prejudiced me against them. Still, several of them were loudly applauded, and a few of these put me in mind of the fable of the pig.

Laura told me the names of the actors and actresses as they came on the stage. She was not content with naming them; the satirical lady drew nice portraits of them. “This one,” she said, “is a booby; that fellow is imperti-



ment; that little minx, whose manner is more free than graceful, goes by the name of Rosarda; she is a bad bargain for the company; she ought to be put into the troop they are raising by order of the Viceroy of New Spain, to be sent forthwith to America.¹ Take a good look at that bright star now coming forward—that fair setting sun is Casilda. If, since she began to have lovers, she had required one stone from each, to build a pyramid, as the Egyptian princess did of old, she could have raised one to the third heaven!” In fact, Laura tore them all to pieces by her scandal, and her mischievous tongue did not even spare her own mistress.

However, I must confess my weakness; I was charmed with the girl, though her character was not morally good. She retailed her scandal so agreeably that she made me even like her malice. She got up between the acts to see if her mistress needed her; but instead of returning at once to her place, she lingered behind the scenes, listening to the soft things which were said to her by her flatterers. Once I followed in order to watch her, and I saw that she had many acquaintances. I counted no less than three actors who stopped to talk to her one after another, and they seemed to converse with her very familiarly. This did not please me, and for the first time in my life I felt

¹ Spanish criminals were at that time sent off to America.

what it was to be jealous. I returned to my seat so thoughtful and sad that Laura noticed it as soon as she had rejoined me. "What is the matter, Gil Blas?" she asked with astonishment. "What gloomy melancholy has taken possession of you since I left you? You seem sad and vexed." "My princess," I replied, "I have good cause to be so; you have a little too much vivacity; I have observed you with the actors. . . ." "Indeed! what an amusing cause for sadness!" she broke in with a laugh. "What! does that trouble you? You are not at the end of your tether; that is very certain; you will see plenty other things among us; you must get used to our free and easy ways. No jealousy, my lad! Jealous men are thought ridiculous among actors; and, so we have none. Fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins are the most complaisant people in the world, and indeed they are often the very ones who establish their families."

After she had exhorted me to take offence at nothing, and to look on everything calmly, she declared that I was the happy mortal who had found the way to her heart. Then she assured me that she would always love me, and only me. On this assurance, which I might have doubted without seeming too distrustful, I promised her not to be alarmed any more; and I kept my word. That very evening I saw her talking in private, and giggling with several

men. When the play was over, we returned home with our mistress, whither Florimonda came soon after to supper with three old noblemen, and an actor. Besides Laura and myself, the other servants in this house were a female cook, a coachman, and a little page. We all five made preparations for the meal. The cook, who was as clever an adept as Mistress Jacinta, prepared the dishes assisted by the coachman. The waiting-maid and the little page laid the cloth, and I set out the sideboard with the finest silver plate and several gold vases,—offerings received by the goddess of the temple. I decked the sideboard with bottles of various wines; and acted as cup-bearer, to show my mistress that I could turn my hand to anything. I wondered at the behaviour of the actresses during the meal: they assumed the airs of ladies of quality; and imagined themselves to be women of the highest rank. Far from addressing the noblemen as “Excellency,” they did not even say, “your lordship,”¹ but simply called them by their names. To be sure, these noblemen spoiled them, and made them vain, by being somewhat too familiar with them. The actor, for his part, like a man accustomed to play the hero, treated them without ceremony; he drank their health, and maintained an air of superiority to them. “Upon my word,” I

¹ See INTRODUCTORY NOTICE, p. xxxvii. 1°.

said to myself, "when Laura was showing me that the marquis and the actor are equal during the day, she might have added that they are still more so during the night, since they pass it in drinking together."

Arsenia and Florimonda were naturally sprightly. A thousand free expressions fell from them, mingled with petty favours and dalliances which were highly relished by these old sinners. Whilst my mistress amused one by a little innocent toying, her friend, between the other two, did not act the Susanna towards them. As I was looking upon this picture, which had only too many attractions for a mature young fellow, the dessert was brought on. Then I placed the bottles and glasses on the table, and went away to sup with Laura, who was waiting for me. "Well! Gil Blas," she said, "what do you think of the noblemen you have just seen?" "No doubt," I replied, "they are greatly smitten with Arsenia and Florimonda." "No," she rejoined, "they are old rakes who visit light of loves,¹ without becoming attached to them. All they ask is for a little complaisance, and they are generous enough to pay handsomely for the trifling favours which they receive. Thank Heaven, Florimonda and my mistress are just now without lovers; I mean that they have no such lovers as come the husband over them, and

¹ See page 237, note 1.

want to engross all the pleasures of a house because they bear all its expenses. For my part I am glad of it, and I maintain that a light of love of any sense should avoid all engagements of that kind. Why should she give herself a master? It is better to earn a carriage penny by penny than to have it all at once, at such a price."

When Laura was in the mood for talking, which was almost always the case, words cost her nothing. What a voluble tongue she had! She related a thousand adventures of the actresses of the Prince's company; and I concluded from all she said that I could not be in a better position for becoming perfectly acquainted with vice. Unfortunately I was at an age when vice does not inspire much horror; and it must be added that the maid could paint irregularities so well that I saw only their attractive side. She had hardly time to relate to me a tenth part of the actresses' exploits, for she had not been talking more than three hours when the noblemen and the actor went away with Florimonda, whom they saw safe home.

After they had gone, my mistress, putting some money into my hands, said: "Gil Blas, here are ten pistoles, to go to market with to-morrow. Five or six of our gentlemen and ladies are to dine here: take care to let us have everything nice." "Madam," I replied,

“with this sum I would engage to regale the whole troop.” “My friend,” replied Arsenia, “please amend your expressions; I would have you know that you must not say a troop, but a company of actors. People speak of a troop of highwaymen, a troop of beggars, a troop of authors; but they always say a company of actors. The actors of Madrid especially deserve to be called a company.” I begged my mistress’s pardon for having used so disrespectful a term, and entreated her very humbly to excuse my ignorance. I assured her that for the future, when I spoke of the gentlemen actors of Madrid in their collective capacity, I would always say “the company.”¹

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE ACTORS LIVED TOGETHER, AND IN WHAT MANNER THEY TREATED AUTHORS.

NEXT morning I began to discharge my functions as a purveyor. It was a fast day. By my mistress’s directions I bought some good fat chickens, rabbits, partridges, and other

¹ The discussion about the use of the words “troop” and “company” was not new in France. The president of the Paris parliament, De Harlay, is reputed to have said to some actors who came to ask him a favour, that he would communicate to his troop the request of their company.

small birds. As the gentlemen players are not satisfied with the behaviour of the Church towards them, they do not scrupulously observe her ordinances. I brought home more provisions than were needed for a dozen good people to spend a pleasant three days' carnival. The cook had her hands full all the morning. Whilst she was getting dinner ready, Arsenia rose, and was at her toilette till noon. Then two actors, Rosimiro and Ricardo, arrived; next came two actresses, Constantia and Celinaura; and a moment later Florimonda appeared, accompanied by a man who had all the appearance of a most finished coxcomb.¹ His hair was foppishly dressed, his hat was set off with a plume of filemot feathers, he wore very tight breeches, and through the slashes in his doublet he displayed a fine shirt with very handsome lace. His gloves and handkerchief were in the hilt of his sword, and he wore his cloak with a grace peculiar to himself.

Nevertheless, though he was good looking and had a handsome figure, I took him at once for some eccentric individual. "This gentleman must be an original," said I to myself. I was not mistaken; he was a remarkable character. As soon as he entered Arsenia's room he ran forward with open arms to embrace the actresses and actors one after another, with more extravagant gestures than those of the

¹ The original has *Senor cavallero*.

beaux. My opinion was not changed when I heard him speak. He paused on every syllable, and pronounced his words emphatically, with gestures and looks suited to the subject. I had the curiosity to ask Laura who this gentleman was. "I can pardon your inquisitiveness," she said; "it is impossible to see and to hear Señor Carlos Alonzo de la Ventoleria¹ for the first time without an eager desire to know something about him. I will draw him to the life. In the first place, he was originally an actor. He gave up the stage through a whim, and now repents it in earnest. Did you observe his dark hair? It is dyed; and so are his eyebrows and his moustache. He is older than Saturn; but as his parents neglected at the time of his birth to have his name inscribed in the parish register, he takes advantage of their omission, and always calls himself a good twenty years younger than he is. Moreover, he is the most conceited man in Spain. He passed the first sixty years of his life in dense ignorance; but, in order to become a learned man, he engaged a private tutor who taught him to spell in Latin and Greek. Nay, more, he knows by heart an infinite number of good stories, which he has related so often as genuine that he now actually believes they are so. He introduces them constantly into his conversation, and it may be said that his wit

¹ *Ventolera* means "gust, vanity, pride."

shines at the expense of his memory. For the rest, he is thought to be a great actor. I devoutly believe it; but I confess that he does not please me. I sometimes hear him declaiming, and, amongst other faults, I think his pronunciation too affected, which, with his tremulous voice, makes his style of delivery seem antiquated and ridiculous."

Such was the picture that the ladies' maid drew of this honorary mummer, and in truth I never saw a human being with a more haughty bearing. He set up, also, for a good conversationalist. He did not fail to bring two or three anecdotes out of his budget, which he related in an impressive and studied manner. On the other hand, the actors and actresses, who had not come there to be silent, did not hold their tongues. They began to discuss their absent comrades, in a manner not over charitable to be sure; but this must be pardoned in actors, as well as in authors. The conversation, therefore, grew warm on this subject. "Ladies," said Rosimiro, "you would never guess what is the last trick of our dear comrade Cesarino? This very morning he bought some silk stockings, ribbons, and lace, which he ordered a page to bring to the rehearsal as though they were a present from a countess." "What knavery," said Señor de la Ventoleria, with a silly and conceited simper. "People were more honest in my time. We

never thought of inventing such stories. It is true that ladies of quality spared us the necessity for it, for they made the purchases themselves; it was their whim." "Zounds!" said Ricardo, in the same manner, "the whim still possesses them; and if I were permitted to explain myself . . . but one must not talk of these things, especially when ladies of a certain rank are concerned."

"Gentlemen," Florimonda broke in, "a truce to your love affairs, if you please; they are known over the whole earth. Let us talk of Ismenia. They say that the nobleman who has spent so much money on her has slipped out of her hands." "Yes, it is a fact," said Constantia; "and what is more, I can tell you that she has also lost a little gentleman, who was in trade, and whom she would infallibly have ruined. I heard this news from the best authority. Her Mercury made an unfortunate mistake; he took to the nobleman a note she wrote for the cit, and sent to the cit a note addressed by her to the nobleman." "These are great losses, my dear!" replied Florimonda. "Oh! as for the lord," rejoined Constantia, "that is no great matter; he almost had spent all his wealth, but the little cit was only just beginning his career. He has not yet been through the hands of the coquettes: more's the pity."

Such was almost the tenor of their conver-

sation till dinner time, and when they were at table their talk turned on the same topic. As I should never have done were I to undertake to relate all the other speeches full of scandal or silliness which I heard, the reader will thank me for suppressing them, that I may tell him how a poor devil of an author was received, who arrived about the end of the meal.

Our little page came and said aloud to his mistress: "Madam, a man with a dirty shirt, splashed up to his middle, and who, if you please, looks very much like a poet, wants to see you." "Shew him up," replied Arsenia. "Do not stir, gentlemen, it is only an author." And in fact it was an author, whose tragedy had been accepted, and who was bringing my mistress her part. His name was Pedro de Moya. On coming into the room he made five or six low bows to the company, who neither rose, nor even returned his compliment. Arsenia merely responded by a slight inclination of her head to the civilities with which he overwhelmed her. He advanced, trembling and confused, dropped his gloves and his hat, picked them up again, drew near my mistress, and presented to her a roll of paper more respectfully than a man who has a law suit presents a petition to a judge. "Madam," he said, "deign to accept the part which I venture to offer you." She received it

with a cold and scornful manner, and did not even condescend to reply to the compliment.

This did not repel our author, who, taking the opportunity to distribute other parts, gave one to Rosimiro and another to Florimonda, who treated him with no more civility than Arsenia. On the contrary the actor, naturally very obliging, as these gentlemen are for the most part, insulted him with stinging jests. Pedro de Moya felt them, but nevertheless dared not notice them, for fear his piece might suffer for it. He departed without saying a word, but acutely hurt, so it seemed to me, by the reception he had met with. I fancy that in his annoyance he did not fail to bestow on the actors such names as they deserved; and the actors, for their part, when he was gone, began to speak of authors very respectfully, indeed!¹

“I think,” said Florimonda, “that Señor Pedro de Moya did not go away very highly pleased.” “Well! madam,” cried Rosimiro, “why should you trouble yourself about that? Are authors worth our notice? If we treated them as our equals it would spoil them. I know these sorry gentlemen, I know them; they would soon forget themselves. Let us always treat them as slaves, and never be afraid of tiring their patience. If their ill-humour sometimes keeps them at a distance from us,

¹ The “very respectfully, indeed!” is evidently used ironically here.

the rage for writing will bring them back again, and they are only too happy if we will but condescend to play their pieces." "You are right," said Arsenia; "we only lose those authors whose fortunes we have made. As soon as we have raised them to a good position idleness takes possession of them, and they work no more. Fortunately the company consoles itself, and the public are no losers."

These fine speeches were applauded; and it was agreed that authors, though badly treated by the actors, were still indebted to them. These mummers looked down on them as their inferiors, and certainly contempt could not farther go.

CHAPTER XII.

GIL BLAS ACQUIRES A TASTE FOR THE STAGE. HE GIVES HIMSELF UP TO THE PLEASURES OF A THEATRICAL LIFE, BUT SOON BECOMES DISGUSTED WITH IT.

THE company remained at table until it was time to go to the theatre. Then they all went there together. I followed them, and saw the play again. It pleased me so much that I resolved to attend there every day. This I

did, and gradually became used to the actors; and such is the force of habit that I was particularly charmed with those who ranted and gesticulated most wildly, and I was not at all singular in that respect.

The beauty of the plays performed touched me no less than their mode of representation. Some enraptured me; and amongst others I liked those in which all the cardinals, or the twelve peers of France were brought on the stage. I retained in my memory scraps of these incomparable plays. I remember that in two days I learned by heart an entire comedy, called *The Queen of Flowers*. The Rose, who was the queen, had the Violet for her confidante, and the Jasmine for her gentleman usher. I could not conceive anything more ingenious than these productions, which seemed to me to do great credit to our national taste.¹

Not content with storing my memory with the finest passages of these dramatic masterpieces, I laboured to improve my taste; and the more certainly to secure this object, I listened with greedy ears to every word that fell from the actors' lips. If they praised a piece, I valued it; if it seemed bad to them, I despised it. I took them to be as good judges of plays

¹ This is a hit at the Spanish stage, on which were often represented allegorical characters. Cervantes was one of the first to introduce them.

as jewellers are of diamonds. Nevertheless, the tragedy of Pedro de Moya was a great success, though they had prophesied it would be a failure. But this did not make me suspect their judgment. I preferred to think that the public was wanting in common sense, rather than doubt the infallibility of the company. I was assured, however, on all hands that the new plays of which the actors had a bad opinion were generally applauded; and that those on the contrary which they received with commendations were nearly always hissed. I was told it was the custom with them to judge thus erroneously of plays; and a thousand cases of success were mentioned which had belied their predictions. It needed all these testimonies to undeceive me.

I shall never forget what happened one day when a new comedy was being played for the first time. The actors had pronounced it cold and tedious; they had even declared that it would never be heard till the end. Under this impression they got through the first act, which was much applauded. This astonished them. They played the second act; and the public received it still better than the first. The actors were disconcerted! "Why, the deuce," said Rosimiro, "this comedy is taking!" Then they went on with the third act, which pleased still more than the two former. "I cannot understand it," said Ricardo; "we thought

this piece would not be relished, and everybody is delighted with it!" "Gentlemen," said one of the actors with much simplicity, "it is because it contains a thousand strokes of wit which we have overlooked."¹

I therefore ceased to look upon actors as competent judges, and began correctly to appreciate their merits. They thoroughly justified all the ridicule which society heaped upon them. I saw actresses and actors whom applause had spoiled, and who, thinking themselves objects of universal admiration, fancied they conferred a favour on the public when they appeared on the boards. I was disgusted by their faults; but unfortunately I found their way of life a little too much to my taste, and plunged into debauchery. How could I help it? All the conversation I heard amongst them was pernicious to a young man, and everything I saw contributed to corrupt me. Had I not known what went on at Casilda's, at Constantia's, and with other actresses, Arsenia's house alone was only too well fitted to ruin me. Besides the old noblemen of whom I have spoken, there came thither the beaux, young men of good family whom the usurers enabled to spend money extravagantly, and

¹ A similar remark is said to have been made by an actor of the *Théâtre Français*, when one of the comedies of Dufresny (a contemporary of Lesage), had been very successful, in spite of the adverse criticisms of the theatrical company.

sometimes also farmers of the revenue who, far from receiving any money, as they did in their own assemblies, for their mere presence, paid here for the right to be present.¹

Florimonda, who lived near us, dined and supped at Arsenia's every day. They seemed so very intimate that many people were surprised by it. It was thought astonishing that coquettes should maintain such a good understanding with each other, and people imagined that sooner or later they would quarrel about some gentleman; but people could not read the hearts of such exemplary friends. A steadfast affection united them. Instead of being jealous of each other, like other women, they had everything in common, preferring to share the spoils rather than foolishly wrangle about the inclinations of the men.

Laura, following the example of these illustrious associates, also made the most of her youth. She had rightly told me that I should see some strange doings. However, I did not play the part of a jealous man, for I had promised to adopt the tone of the company in this respect. For some days I dissembled, contenting myself with asking her the names of the men with whom I saw her in private conversation. She always told me that they were uncles

¹ The *traitants* or farmers of the revenue, in their yearly assemblies, were paid for their attendance by *jetons*, which were worth a certain sum of money.

or cousins. What a number of relatives she had! Her family must have been more numerous than that of King Priam! The girl did not indeed confine herself to her uncles and cousins; she occasionally went about luring strangers, and personating the widow of rank at the house of the old woman, mentioned before. In fact, Laura, to give the reader a just and precise notion of her character, was as young, as pretty, and as loose as her mistress, who had no other advantage over her than that of amusing the town in a more public capacity.

I was borne down by the stream for three weeks, and gave myself up to all kinds of debauchery. But at the same time I must say that amidst these pleasures I often felt the stirrings of remorse, arising from my education, which embittered my enjoyments. License could not altogether triumph over this remorse. On the contrary, as I became more profligate, I became more repentant, and, thanks to my happy disposition, the disorders of a theatrical career began to make me shudder. "Ah! wretch," I said to myself, "is this how you are fulfilling the expectations of your family? Was it not enough to deceive them by abandoning the vocation of a tutor? Ought your condition as a servant prevent you from living as an honest man? Does it become you to be the companion of such vicious people? Envy, rage, and avarice sway some, while

modesty is abandoned by others. These again give themselves up to intemperance and sloth, and those carry their pride even to insolence. It is enough; I will live no longer with the seven deadly sins."

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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